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# *BRAND: A DRAMATIC POEM*

*In Five Acts*

*By HENRIK IBSEN*

*Translated in the Original Metres  
with an Introduction and Notes by*

*C. H. HERFORD, Litt.D., M.A.*

*Professor of English Language and Literature in the  
University College of Wales, Aberystwyth; author  
of 'Studies in the Literary Relations of  
England and Germany,' etc.*

*LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN*

*MDCCCXCIV*

**Edinburgh : T. and A. CONSTABLE, Printers to Her Majesty**

To M. H.

*Not to a lily-haunted glade  
I lead you, where idyllic Hours  
Shed softly upon sleeping flowers  
Their charm of changing shade;*

*But to a forest, tossed and torn  
By a great wind that rends the sky;  
And through it quivers one lone cry  
Of nightingale forlorn.*

*Love's cry, in rude contention met  
With thunder of the wind of Will;—  
O listen! you whose soul is still  
To such sweet concord set*

*That Will upwelling, tender-strong,  
Out of Love's inmost heart of fire,  
Breaks on the world as on a lyre,  
And out of storm grows song.*

C. H. H.





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## PREFACE

AN attempt to render more generally accessible and intelligible a work which is confessedly among the leading achievements of Henrik Ibsen scarcely needs excuse. *Brand*, though a very fascinating and suggestive poem, is also a distinctly complex and difficult one, and its difficulties are far from disclosing themselves completely at first sight. To those who best realise its suggestiveness and its complexity, the Introduction will scarcely seem unduly long, and it is hoped that the Notes may be of service even to students of the original, whose numbers it is the principal aim of this edition to increase. Those, however, who are quite new to *Brand* are advised to leave the Introduction alone for the present (or to read at most the first section), and to return to it, if at all, after a rapid reading either of the original text or of the present translation. That which is best in the poem needs no interpreter ;

and on the other hand it seemed superfluous to extend the Introduction by formally rehearsing the story, which, as story, the poem itself, in the main, so luminously sets forth.

More excuse is perhaps required for the attempt to render *Brand* 'in the metres of the original.' All translation in verse, and especially in rhymed verse, requires apology; but if there is any case in which the apology may be briefer and less abject than usual, it is probably where the metrical form of the original is at once very marked and striking, and yet relatively imitable. *Brand* is the work of a man with the keenest relish for the ring of rhyme, notwithstanding his almost entire emancipation from the conventionalities of poetical phrase. To despoil it of rhyme is to rob it of effects which its author cultivated with deliberate care, and which, in the memory of every reader of the original, are indissolubly wedded to its phrase. To use prose is to be content with a half-solution of the problem of translation; and even the compromise of simply dropping the rhyme and keeping the measure, adopted by Messrs. Archer in their brilliant and scholarly version of *Peer Gynt*,

labours (as none know better than themselves) under the grave defect that almost all the measures in question are associated by the English ear with rhyme. To retain rhyme is, on the other hand, no doubt to sacrifice some measure of verbal fidelity. Yet the constraint imposed by rhyme is in *Brand* reduced to a minimum, the rhymes being arranged and varied with perfect freedom. The freedom of arrangement is of peculiar value. It permits the translator to satisfy the elementary conditions of metre in at least half a dozen different ways, and multiplies by that amount the chances that a rendering at once metrical, idiomatic, and faithful, can be found, though not perhaps his individual chance of finding it. To render *Brand* in verse which shall in some degree adumbrate the original, is, in short, not impossible, though it asks patience. How far the present rendering attains that end the critical reader must decide. It may be added that the original is here followed, as a rule, line for line ; but there are perhaps eight or ten cases in which a line of the original has been expanded into two, and some three or four in which two have

been compressed into one. And the order of lines forming part of the same sentence has been modified without reserve.

It only remains to express my grateful acknowledgments to those who have in various ways aided the progress of this book. In the first place to Ibsen himself, who received and entertained me with great kindness at Christiania, freely discussed points of difficulty, and showed an encouraging interest in the work. Among other Norwegian friends, Hr. J. O. Halvorsen, Amanuensis of the admirably managed University Library at Christiania, Hr. Christian Collin, cand. mag., and Hr. Fischer, cand. mag. (of the University Library), gave me important aid in my researches there. Of English friends, I have to thank Mr. Gosse for the kindly interest he has throughout taken in this work, which but for his encouragement would have remained a fragment, and Mr. William Archer, who was good enough to subject the whole of the proofs to a detailed revision, which has enabled me to clear away numerous blots and obscurities. The beginning and the end of the Fourth Act (published in *The Contemporary Review*, March 1891, as 'A

Scene from Ibsen's *Brand*') are still more largely indebted to Mr. Archer—many single phrases, lines and couplets, and the greater part of the description of the Storm (p. 132) being his work. Without the aid of his acute and scholarly criticism the translation would be many degrees worse than it is. It has also benefited throughout by the helpful suggestions of my wife. My friend Mr. C. E. Tyrer gave me some help in revising the introduction.

Among the numerous literary essays dealing with *Brand*, my own owes most to Mr. Wicksteed's *Four Lectures on Ibsen* (Sonnenschein, 1892), and to the exhaustive article on Ibsen in Hr. Halvorsen's *Norsk Forfatter-lexikon*, the bibliography in which is an indispensable guide to the now vast literature of the subject. Something is also due to the recent volumes of MM. A. Ehrhard, *H. Ibsen et le Théâtre Contemporain* (1892), and E. Tissot, *Le Drame Norvégien* (1893); to V. Vasenius' *H. Ibsen: Ett Skaldeporträtt* (Stockholm, 1882); to Mr. G. B. Shaw's ingenious if perverse *The Quintessence of Ibsen* (1891); and to the well-known biography by Jæger, and the résumé of it issued by the author with Ibsen's authorisation last year,



*H. Ibsen og hans Værker: En Fremstilling i Grundrids* (Christiania 1892). The prose translation of *Brand* by Mr. W. Wilson (Methuen, 1892) has occasionally suggested a word or a phrase. The graceful versions contributed by Mr. Gosse to the English translation of Jæger's *Life* have also supplied several valuable hints, and one or two complete lines. The opening and close of the Fourth Act are reprinted by the courteous permission of the proprietors of the *Contemporary Review*.

C. H. H.

## INTRODUCTION

Preliminary : The Poetry and the Prose of Ibsen.—  
I. Literary History of *Brand*, p. xviii.—II. The Three  
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'I HAVE never given up the hope of writing  
another drama in verse,' Ibsen said, a few  
weeks ago, to a foreign visitor at Christiania.  
'I have often made beginnings, but never  
carried them out. I should like my last  
drama to be in verse—if one only knew before-  
hand which was going to be the last!' Few  
who have any acquaintance with Ibsen's verse-  
dramas will read this utterance without in-  
terest; not so much because of the shadowy

prospect it offers of poetry to come, but because it indicates that the ageing poet, who for a quarter of a century has written with such austere reserve that nine-tenths of his readers take him for the high-priest of matter-of-fact realism, is still kindled by the memory of days when he yielded willingly to the promptings of a rich imagination, a brilliant wit, and a potent and original faculty of song. Much, no doubt, in the poems of his prime is irrevocably put by. Their background of ethical and social thought is palpably immature. The *Comedy of Love* is boyish compared to the *Doll's House*; *Brand* and *Peer Gynt* need to be supplemented by the more searching and penetrating analysis of *Ghosts*. Yet who will deny that the later dramas, with all their riper thinking, lack something of the large and many-sided apprehension of life which belongs to the earlier? They have the precision, but also much of the hardness and abstractness, of scientific diagrams. They inform, impress, convince, or paralyse conviction; they drive home a thought with more formidable power, and slay an illusion with a more deadly and certain stroke; but they do not

in the same degree irradiate and fertilise those parts of human nature which lie outside definite intellectual conviction, and yet give conviction much of its practical vitality and momentum. The problems they deal with, too, are not only not the whole of life, but they are of a kind not always best approached in practice by curiously scrutinising their conditions. The happiest men are not those who most pertinaciously seek happiness; and the man who is perpetually occupied with his dependence on the past is likely to make a worse bargain with the heredity that none can escape than the man who acts as if he were free. No one is entitled to entertain illusions; it is the permanent glory of poetry—‘the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge’—not that it overlays unpleasant facts with a veil of radiant dreams, but that it feeds that apprehension of the greatness and beauty of the world, which is no illusion, and which can give nerve and vigour to life when all illusions have faded away. Second, if not first, among Ibsen’s poems in this quality is *Brand*.

## I

*Brand* was written in the summer of 1865, at Ariccia, near Rome. Fifteen months before, Ibsen had left Christiania, a voluntary exile, eager to escape from the narrow Scandinavian world, and burning with the sense of national disgrace. Denmark was in the throes of the heroic but hopeless struggle to which her northern kinsmen had sent only a handful of volunteers. He had travelled southward, almost within hearing of the Prussian guns; and among the passengers on the steamer was that venerable silver-haired mother who, as his sarcastic verses tell, believed so firmly in the safety of her soldier-son, and with such good ground, 'for he was a *Norwegian* soldier.'<sup>1</sup> On arriving at Rome he turned resolutely away from these rankling memories, broke all the bonds that tied him to his country, plunged into the study of the ancient world, and made preparations for that colossal drama on the Emperor Julian which eight years later saw the light.

<sup>1</sup> The poem *Troens grund*. It is translated by Mr. Wicksteed, *Lect.* p. 24. This admirable little volume is indispensable to the English student of Ibsen's poetry.

But the genius of the North held him in too strong a grip. 'Never have I seen the Home and its life so fully, so clearly, so near by,' he told the Christiania students in 1873, 'as precisely from a distance and in absence.'<sup>1</sup> Under the Italian sky, among the myrtles and aloes of the 'Paradise of exiles,' there rose before him more vividly than ever the vision of the stern and rugged Norwegian landscape, the solemn twilight of the fjord, the storm-swept glacier, the peasant-folk absorbed in the desperate struggle for bread, officialdom absorbed in material progress, 'intelligence' growing refined, 'humane,' and somewhat effeminate; and, emerging here and there, glimpses somewhat futile and forlorn of heroic manhood. A summer tour which he had made among the western fjords in July 1862, on a commission from Government to collect popular legends, supplied a crowd of vivid local and personal reminiscences; a ruined parsonage under a precipice, a little mouldering church, a wild march across Jotunheim in storm and snow, and then the dizzy plunge down into

<sup>1</sup> Speech to the students, printed in full in Halvorsen, *Norsk Forfatter-lexikon*, art. 'IBSEN.'

one of those deep lowland valleys that strike up like huge rocky rifts from the fjord-head into the heart of the mountains.<sup>1</sup> A few months of intense labour sufficed to organise these scattered images into a moving world of drama, penetrated through and through with Ibsen's individuality, and clothed in rich and many-coloured poetry. He had as yet written nothing at once so original, so kindling, and so profusely strewn with the most provocative brilliances of style; nothing which, with all its fierce invective against Norway, was so profoundly and intimately Norwegian in colouring and in spirit. Upon its publication, on March 15, 1866, at Copenhagen, the whole Scandinavian world was taken by storm. A Copenhagen letter, of April 17, to the *Christiania Morgenblad* (No. 113, 1866), tells how 'it is read with the greatest interest, its praise is in all mouths, and its weighty watchwords in all minds.' 'Wherever you go,' reports another correspondent, 'the talk is only of *Brand*, and that to such a degree that a Norwegian visiting Copenhagen found himself fatigued, in spite of his great admiration for

<sup>1</sup> For details, see the Notes to pp. 30, 64, 83, 105.

the poem, by the eternal one-and-the-same, at all times, and in all places.' Literary Denmark, which barely knew Ibsen by name, began to read his previous works, with not unnatural amazement that plays so brilliant as the *Pretenders* and the *Comedy of Love* should have remained so obscure. The religious public crowded the bookshops, eager to be thrilled by the evangelical fulminations which they understood the new poem to contain.<sup>1</sup> The Christiania folks began to suspect that they had been starving a prophet in the poet they had insufficiently fed. In both capitals, indeed, some voices of criticism, even of protest, were presently raised. Doctrinaire theologians declared it unchristian and dangerous;<sup>2</sup> matter-of-fact observers found that many of the incidents were impossible in Norway;<sup>3</sup> literary men, ravished by the poetry, pronounced the ideas nonsense; while enthusiastic young men and women sometimes defended it with more zeal than discretion.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The above details from Halvorsen, *u.s.*; and Brandes, *Moderne Geister*.

<sup>2</sup> 'L. T.' (Krohg), in the *Morgenblad*, 1866, No. 229.

<sup>3</sup> Professor Monrad, in a series of able articles in the *Morgenblad*, 1866, Nos. 242, 249, 256, 263.

<sup>4</sup> One ardent disciple and correspondent of the poet's, Laura Kieler, even paid him the doubtful compliment of a



But no cavilling could keep down the instinctive feeling that the poem, let its faults be what they might, was in some indefinable way *great*; and its unmistakable power blunted the inquiry into its goodness or badness. A gifted poet, A. O. Vinje, who reviewed his old friend Ibsen, as he reviewed every one else, with sarcastic geniality, expressed this frankly enough. 'It was said of Welhaven and Wergeland that, if compounded, they would have made one first-rate man. Before I read *Brand* I thought that only a third- or second-rate man would result from the compounding of Ibsen and Björnson. . . . But now, after reading it, I cannot help suspecting that Ibsen might have made *the one big end of a big man*.'<sup>1</sup>

Another reviewer, who thinks that few will read the whole twice, admits that there are

continuation, *Brands Døttre, Et Livsbillede* (Christiania, 1869), which tells how Agnes has three daughters, and how 'a light enters into Brand's heart,' and instead of being buried in misery and disquiet under an avalanche, he expires in peace and faith in his daughters' arms. Of this climax the authoress gives due warning at the close of a long and interesting Introduction, and I confess that having read so far I read no further in the book, either on that day or any other.

<sup>1</sup> In his journal *Dølen* ('The Dalesman'), 29th April 1866; Vinje's *Skrifter i Utval*, iv. 36 f.

a hundred places to which the reader will turn again and again.<sup>1</sup>

The sale was from the outset immense, and has continued, though at a diminished pace, till the present day. Four editions appeared before the close of 1866; the eleventh in 1889. Ibsen was little accustomed to such success. It is said that immediately after the publication his sister-in-law drank to the 'tenth edition'; the poet confidently shook his head and declared that the profits of the tenth edition should be hers. She took him at his word, and has not repented her prophetic gift.<sup>2</sup> Outside Scandinavia, too, the name of the author of *Brand* rapidly became famous. It was the beginning of his European fame. In Germany, its intellectual suggestiveness and philosophical mysticism were keenly appreciated; it was compared with *Hamlet* and with *Faust*, and the puzzling phenomenon of so much abstruse thinking in a Scandinavian found a satisfactory explanation in the Teutonic maidens whom the poet's seafaring or mercantile ancestors had in three successive genera-

<sup>1</sup> Johann Vibe, *Litterært Tidsskrift*, i. (1866), p. 183 f.

<sup>2</sup> Halvorsen, *Forf.-lex.* u.s.

tions taken to wife. No less than four verse translations have appeared there since 1872.<sup>1</sup>

Even on the stage, for which it was never meant, *Brand* has not been quite unknown. In Christiania, the Fourth Act has repeatedly been played; but it was reserved for the Director of the New Theatre at Stockholm, L. Josephson, to undertake the bold experiment of performing the whole. On March 24th, 1885, a crowded house sat through a performance which lasted from 6.30 to 1.15. It was repeated fifteen times.<sup>2</sup> Of recent attempts of this kind in England it is needless to speak.

Together with its still more splendid and various, yet completely dissimilar, successor, *Peer Gynt*, *Brand* marks an epoch in Scandi-

<sup>1</sup> By Siebold (Kassel, 1872), Julie Ruhkopf (Bremen, 1874), Alfred Freih. v. Wolzogen (Wismar, 1876), and L. Passarge (Leipzig, 1882). I have seen only the second and fourth. Fr. Ruhkopf's appears to be fairly literal, but a little stiff and tame; Passarge, on the contrary, has supplemented the defects of the original with a lavishness of native fancy which makes the title of translator quite inadequate to his merits.

<sup>2</sup> The Stockholm *Ny ill. Tidning*, 1885, Nos. 14, 15, gives an interesting account of the performance, with several illustrations. *Brand* was played by E. Hillberg. Ibsen congratulated the Director in a letter printed by Halvorsen, *u.s.*

navian literature. A large majority of those who know the original believe that it marks an epoch in the literature of Europe. Nothing in English literature in the least resembles a work, which is nevertheless peculiarly fitted to impress and to fascinate the English nature.<sup>1</sup> But those who can imagine the prophetic fire of Carlyle fused with the genial *verve* and the intellectual athleticism of Browning, and expressed by aid of a dramatic faculty to parallel which we must go two centuries backward, may in some degree understand that fascination.

## II

The reader of Ibsen's powerful historical drama, *Kongsemnerne*, will remember how, in King Skule's hour of ruin, the shade of the dead Bishop Nicholas suddenly forgets his rôle, and delivers a prophetic sermon across the footlights to the Norwegian audience of 1862 :—

‘While to their life-work Norsemen set out,  
Will-lessly wavering, daunted with doubt,

---

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Gosse has, however, pointed out that it has points of likeness, striking rather than important, to Dobell's dramatic poem *Balder* (1854).

While hearts are shrunken, minds helplessly  
shivering,  
Weak as a willow-wand, wind-swept and  
quivering,  
While about one thing alone they're united,  
Namely, that greatness be stoned and despited,—  
While they seek honour in fleeing and falling,  
Under the banner of baseness unfurl'd,—  
Then Bishop Nicholas toils in his calling,  
The Bagler-bishop's at work in the world.'<sup>1</sup>

This significant *parabasis* gives the best clue to the nature of the ethical passion, which drives like a rushing wind through the pages of *Brand*.

This First Act of the poem is little but a translation of this summary analysis of the national character into vivid dramatic dialogue. The Peasant, Einar, and Gerd,—the Faint, the Frivolous, and the Wild,—are all foreshadowed in these lines. They stand for so many in different forms of failure to satisfy that demand for Will, for 'Force of Character, for wholeness of life, which with Ibsen, as with Carlyle, sometimes seems to occupy the whole field of ethics. The Peasant 'fleeing and falling' in that grim walk over the

<sup>1</sup> *The Pretenders*, translated by W. Archer, p. 360. A slight verbal change has been made in the rendering.

glacier through storm and darkness, stands for Will that shrinks; Einar, with his chameleon instincts, his easy impulsive gaiety, for the Will that 'wavers and quivers'; Gerd, the distracted gipsy-girl, whose missiles fall 'like witch-corn' about Brand in his heroic voyage across the fjord, and whose haunt is the savage 'Ice-church,' where the wind sings mass, and the sudden avalanche sweeps all living things to ruin,—Gerd stands for the untaught, elemental savagery that 'stones the noble and devoted,' and finds foul things fair. All three failed in the heroic wholeness of the ideal Man, as Ibsen conceived him, the man whose entire being is concentrated upon one aim which he inflexibly pursues. The life of modern Norwegians is, he declares in a famous and brilliant passage, a 'collection of fragments,'—a mass of half-desires thwarting and dwarfing one another, and breaking up the heroic unity of manhood into dust and atoms. This was the 'fatal cancer' which was sapping the national life. In ordinary times its deadliness might escape notice; but became at once apparent when a great crisis put the mettle of the nation to a test which

it could not avoid. To a man who in 1862 had denounced the 'will-less wavering' and 'willow-wand weakness' of Norway, the events of the two following years were naturally as oil poured on fire. When the Danish King, in November 1863, supported by the King of Sweden, declared Slesvig an integral part of Denmark, there was much loud jubilation in Norway at the extension of 'Scandinavian' rule, even among people not at all prepared to allow that the cause of Denmark and of Norway were one; while the more ardent spirits pledged themselves over flowing cups to support their 'brothers' in the field. The actual invasion of Denmark by Prussia and Austria which followed (February 1864) was, in Ibsen's eyes, for his own country too, a moral crisis which could be manfully met only in one way; and when the Storting, by virtually refusing war,<sup>1</sup> forced the King, to his bitter shame, to leave Denmark to her fate, Ibsen's heroic scorn broke into flame, and found its fiercest and keenest expression in

<sup>1</sup> They accepted the King's demand that the army should be placed absolutely in his hands, but coupled the condition that he was to make war only in alliance with England or France.

the pages of *Brand*. It is the worst trait in the man of 'fragments' to be

'A little free in promise-making,  
And then, when vows in liquor will'd  
Must be in mortal stress fulfill'd,  
A little fine in promise-breaking';<sup>1</sup>

and among the 'dark visions' which sweep before the gaze of Brand in his final ruin, the thought reappears in more fantastic imagery,—the 'gentle brothers hiding in the hat of darkness while their kinsmen ride to battle,' and the 'dragon' of the fjords, who, in spite of his newly-won teeth and tongue (the indented war-flag), dares not bite, but answers the call for aid by hissing: "What is that to him?"<sup>2</sup>

We presently discover, however, that the three national 'vices' which Brand goes forth to overthrow do not stand—for him or for Ibsen—upon the same moral plane. 'Faintness' and 'Frivolity' belong to the lowest circle of the Ibsenian Inferno,—as the absolute negation of all heroic wholeness of life. They find with him such mercy as Treason found with the imperial-minded Dante. But in 'Wildness,' misguided and defiant thing though it

<sup>1</sup> Tr. p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Tr. pp. 258-9.



was, he could not help recognising something not only compatible with the force of character upon which that wholeness of life is based, but in a subtle way akin to it. He condemned it as men condemn the faults to which their master-bias leans. Hence Brand's 'warfare' with it is like the Aristotelian brave man's struggle with 'rashness,' or the generous man's with extravagance; or like Dante's tender chastisement of that vice in which he saw a distorted image of the divine lord Love. The figure of Gerd, who symbolises 'Wildness,' thus falls under a cross light of conflicting moral ideas, which make this strange creation as intellectually suggestive as she is at first enigmatical. All the features of her existence share, and enforce, this doubleness of aspect. She dwells alone, tameless and loveless, scorning human ties and humane impulses;—a natural egoist of the school of the Troll-king in *Peer Gynt*, whose motto, 'Be sufficient for yourself,' is the ruin of Peer. But this savage and loveless isolation has of itself a strange fascination for Ibsen; and Gerd is no less clearly a spiritual sister of that spectral second self of the poet who in *På Vidderne* appears

before him 'with dumb thoughts like an Aurora-flame about his brow,' the embodiment of all his own half-suppressed scorn for the bonds of home and humanity;—nay, she already foreshadows that 'Enemy of the People,' who was one day to declare that the strongest man on earth is he who stands alone. She dwells among the crags, looking down scornfully on the valley and the dwellings of men, and again we are reminded of the fascination of mountain freedom which vibrates through this same *På Vidderne*: 'Over the moors flies the reindeer,—after it in wind and wet: better that than to break stones in the needy earth below! But I hear the church-bell ringing upward from the Ness. Let it ring, let it ring,—the foss has a better song. . . . My lowland life I have lived out; up here on the fell are freedom and God, down yonder fumble the others!' Ibsen merely completes this motive when he creates for his distracted mountain-dweller a 'Church' among the crags and ice, and when he makes her the deadly enemy of the Hawk, the symbol of the human sociality in which she has no part.

Gerd is a mountain-solitary, but one neither

after the manner of Wordsworth nor after that of Rousseau. Ibsen cares for mountains as the abode rather of freedom than of sublime beauty, and for solitude as the antithesis rather of society than of civilisation; which, as such, he has at no time shown any disposition to renounce, either in art or in life.

The Ice-church which Gerd haunts is made, characteristically, to play an essential part in the intellectual mechanism of the poem. Throughout, it is contrasted with the Church in the Valley, as the religion of savage solitude to the religion of 'men who dwell in houses.' 'Which is the better?' Brand asks already in the First Act;<sup>1</sup> and the Valley-church in the stifling air which crushes the spiritual life of society wins no preference over the Church of the desolate fell which is the negation of society itself. The entire poem may be said to revolve between these two extremes: it represents a heroic attempt to spiritualise society by a teaching which saps its human basis. At the great crises of the action, the two Churches become almost human things, sharing in the keen encounter of the ideals they symbolise.

<sup>1</sup> Tr. p. 36.

When Brand is on the point of deserting his people in order to save his child, we hear, in Gerd's vision, the Ice-church bells calling from the crags, while 'the parson' hastes away 'on the back of the Hawk' of compromise, and the people, released from his yoke, crowd upward to the realms of freedom to embrace again all the natural impulses upon which he had laid his spell. And when the Valley-church has been shattered, the old drowsy religion crushed, and an all-subduing spiritualism, as Brand dreams, set in its place, it is in the desolate Ice-church that he finds himself at last, his dream of social regeneration over, and the wild Gerd at his side, while the Hawk rolls dead at his feet.

## III

No class of Norwegian society is exempted from this comprehensive indictment of the Norwegian character. But the brunt of it is borne by that class which during the previous generation had become most inured to the smell of literary incense, and for the last dozen years had set its stamp most decisively upon literature. In Norway, as elsewhere, Roman-

c

ticism and Democracy had combined to throw about the Peasant a glamour of charm; and the poets of the earlier half of the century—the sons, almost exclusively, of officials—had sung with sentimental enthusiasm of the lowly lives which they knew only from the outside. The ‘national’ revolt in the forties and fifties against the culture and literature of Denmark gave this enthusiasm substance and reality. For almost all that was ‘national’ in Norway was to be found in the keeping of the Peasant, stored up in the treasure-house of his usages, his folk-lore, his tales, his speech, his song. Gifted men, who had drunk in these things from childhood, crowded into literature and found an eager hearing: Asbjørnsen and Moe collected fairy tales; Landstad and Bugge, ballads; Ivar Aasen composed his wonderful dictionary of the Norse dialects. Tidemand became the first great painter of peasant life; Bjørnson its first gifted poet; and Gude first painted with power the natural grandeur which surrounds the Norwegian peasant’s home. A new literature began to grow out of these rich traditions; nay, a new language,—a sort of quintessence of the popular speech,—was con-

jured up, with more effort and more noise, by a group of enthusiasts, led by two gifted poets and ripe scholars, Aasen and Vinje. It is true that their profounder study of peasant-life did some damage to the romantic legend of the Peasant. Nevertheless, since it was essentially concerned with the poetic and picturesque elements in the peasant's life, its result was to obscure the many elements which were neither poetic nor picturesque, and to establish a conception of the Peasant which, though no longer 'legendary,' was true only when the lucky mood was on, and when the happy moment came by.

This fabric of idealism Ibsen rends with a rude hand. He has never shown any sympathy for 'Norse-Norse' tendencies. In *Peer Gynt* he pours scorn upon the speech-framers; and his own language is neither more nor less 'Norwegian' than that of any other cultivated Norseman. Of the glorious scenery amid which the peasant dwells he lets us see little but the barrenness which makes life hard and the gloom which makes it monotonous; and the peasant himself he paints as a dull drudge 'stooping in the yoke,' with earth-

bound eyes, his inborn spiritual capacities stunted by the ceaseless toil for a livelihood, easily inflamed with religious enthusiasm, but promptly suppressing it in the face of a conflicting offer of bread and gold. Suffering calls out the brute in him, not the hero. This sternness provoked the protest of Vinje, the peasant-poet *par excellence*: 'Our peasant may be poor,' he writes, 'but he is refined; he is delicate in his ways of thinking, when really under stress. He is a man, not a monster.'<sup>1</sup>

## IV

Who was responsible for these defects in the national character? Ibsen's reply is definite and peremptory enough: The State. 'Why has this sleep fallen on the people?' asks Brand indignantly of the Mayor. 'Because you officials have lulled and stupefied it—caged and tamed its remnant of Mountain-Nature.'

'Out of your niggard Hunger-cure  
They pass dejected, dull, demure;  
Their best, their bravest blood you tap,  
Scoop out their marrow and their sap;  
Pound into splinters every soul  
That should have stood a welded whole.'

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<sup>1</sup> Vinje, *Dølen*, u.s.

'The State crushes Individuality; away with the State!' This was the beginning and the end of Ibsen's politics. 'When that revolution is accomplished,' he wrote some years later to Georg Brandes, 'I will be there. Undermine the notion of the State, let freewill and spiritual affinity be the only recognised basis of union, and you will have a liberty worthy of the name.'<sup>1</sup> Hence, if he calls upon the 'fragments' of men for the strong Will that makes whole, he reserves his fiercest anathemas for an administration which either galls the fragile spiritual life by over-rigid forms, or starves it by draining off its energy, or demoralises it by too persistent doses of material comfort.

The theory of the State thus announced was no doubt sufficiently crude; but it was a not unnatural product of the political *régime* under which Ibsen had grown up, which had however already passed its most acute crisis some years before *Brand* was written.

During the nineteen years 1840-59, the official party in the *Storting*, supported by the 'classes'—the party of 'intelligence,' as they

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Jæger, *H. Ibsen*, p. 205 (Eng. Tr.).



called themselves,—held their own triumphantly against the peasants and their genial leader, the poet Wergeland.<sup>1</sup> In 1859, however, they had to submit to the law which provided that, in future, the Country members should be to the Town members as two to one. This at once secured the peasants a majority.<sup>2</sup> However, the officials, as a body, used their power with ability and goodwill, and under the energetic guidance of Oskar I. and his ministry materially changed the face of the country. New *chaussées* were built and old ones reconstructed; railways (1854) and telegraphs were introduced; canals and lighthouses multiplied; agriculture was promoted by the foundation of agronomic schools (1844), business of all kinds by the cheapening and equalisation of the post.<sup>3</sup> Wealth grew rapidly, while growing inter-

<sup>1</sup> In politics, as in poetry, the spiritual father of Björnson.

<sup>2</sup> Prof. J. E. Sars, *Et og andet om vor politiske Situation*, in *Nyt Tidsskrift*, 1882, p. 379. Prof. Sars the historian, one of the most genial and brilliant of Ibsen's early associates, is now editor of this review, which may be warmly recommended to all who are interested in the intellectual life of modern Norway.

<sup>3</sup> These details are based on Överland's *Lærebog i Norges nyeste historie* (1887).

course began to wear down the dissonances of provincial life. The age grew 'civil,' or, as the Mayor has it, 'humane,' like its exemplar the king,—a striking type of that combination of civilising energy and politic compliance with public opinion which this word in Ibsen's mouth denotes.<sup>1</sup> Changes such as these come home to men's business and bosoms too palpably to arouse widespread opposition; but a lonely voice or two from the fastnesses of old Norway had already anticipated the fiery diatribes of Brand. Vinje had strewn amid the enthralling poetry of his *Ferdaminni* many a sarcastic allusion to the new roads.<sup>2</sup> And Ibsen himself, during his journey in the west in 1862, had suggestively contrasted, in a letter from Vestnæs, the material wellbeing of the district with the dilapidation of the Church. 'The farms are well cultivated,' he wrote, 'and the houses comely to look at. In short, all kinds of worldly wellbeing seem to be highly

<sup>1</sup> On his most famous act of compliance, see note to p. 258.

<sup>2</sup> These 'Travel-memories,' recording a journey of 1860, throw a picturesque light on the Norway that Ibsen has in view.

treasured here. But the Church, and everything ecclesiastical, with the exception of the parsonage, stands on a weak, not to say tumble-down, foundation. How far,' he adds sarcastically, 'there may be in these phenomena a symbolism by which the *Church News* (a prominent ecclesiastical organ) may profit, I as a layman do not pretend to decide.'<sup>1</sup> It is tempting to see in this passage the germ of that other mouldering, 'tumble-down' (*fældeførdig*) Church, which Brand ruins and rebuilds.

The genius of the 'humane age' is embodied in Ibsen's *Mayor* ('Foged,' more literally Sheriff),—a character drawn with singular *verve* and humour. A genial and capable promoter of new roads and bridges, prisons and workhouses, fresh ways of earning and fresh facilities for spending,—looked up to by the people and ardently admired as a first-rate man of business by his subordinates,—he is

<sup>1</sup> *Illust. Nyhedsbladet*, 26th Oct. 1862. This letter led to a fierce attack by Krohg ('L. T.') in the *Morgenblad*, No. 313. This busy but unscrupulous theologian afterwards reviewed *Brand* in the very spirit of the 'Dean'; cf. 'Bemærkninger om Ibsen's *Brand* fra det christelige Standpunkt,' *Morgenbladet*, 1866, No. 299. Was he in Ibsen's mind?—Some of the emanations of the 'Christian standpoint' are, it must be said, quite unfit for quotation.

the most successful of governors until the arrival of Brand. He has no principle but success, and success means 'adapting oneself to the wants of the country.' If you can't carry things by force, carry them by compromise. In thinking, as he playfully hints, he seeks the 'winged' thought, 'that is to say, the thought that shifts its ground.' So liberal-minded a man naturally favours popular culture—within limits; even presides on occasion at village festivities, and perorates eloquently on the great days of old. The taste for poetry is elevating, and ought to be encouraged; but poetry must never be mixed up with life. Culture is a graceful adjunct to bread-winning.<sup>1</sup> Of moral culture he has no conception. His remedy for crime is a new prison; for poverty a new workhouse, or wholesale almsgiving; for moral and intellectual wants of all kinds,

<sup>1</sup> Ibsen's animus here is well illustrated by his funeral oration at Rome over the grave of the historian P. A. Munch, June 12, 1865, where he contrasts the political distinction which only great *States* can acquire with the high culture which is open to every *nation*. '*States* like ours cannot hold their own by material forces; but *nations* like ours can win the right to exist by labouring for culture. . . . The State, as such, among us, sees in culture only the decorations of the edifice, not its stays and timbers.'—*Ill. Nyhedsbladet*, 1865, No. 29.

in the last resort, a 'commission.'<sup>1</sup> His heart and soul are in material progress, and it is with cutting irony that Ibsen makes him defend the Romantic culture of the Past, by the plea—hollow on his lips—that 'great memories bear in them the seed of growth.' All Ibsen's intense scorn for dilettante idealism rings out in Brand's retort:

'Yes, memories that to Life are bound.  
But you, of Memory's empty mound  
Have made a stalking-horse for Sloth.'

As the Mayor represents the 'humanity' of the State, so the Dean (*Provsten*, more literally 'the Archdeacon') embodies the gross and mechanical conception of spiritual things which a time of eager economic advance commonly induces. The Church in Norway is a department of the State, like the Post-office or the Army; and the Dean identifies their ends with a frankness almost inconceivable to an

<sup>1</sup> The word has a peculiarly scornful ring in Ibsen's mouth. 'He is always highly amused,' relates Brandes, 'when he reads in the papers: "And then a commission was appointed," or "And then a union was formed." He sees a symptom of modern corruption in the fact that as soon as any one wishes to carry out a plan, his first thought is to found a union or a commission.' Another Carlylean trait. Brandes, *Moderne Geister*, p. 434.

Anglican. The State requires religion only as a means to order and morality; 'good Christians' means for it 'good citizens,' and it pays the priest with a sole eye to their manufacture. Individual tastes and needs are as irrelevant to it as to the road-maker or the prison-maker; weigh them in the mass, he says to Brand, 'use one comb to all the flock.'

'The State is (as you hardly dream)  
Exactly *half* Republican :  
Liberty held in strictest ban,  
Equality in high esteem.'

This secular machinery imposes no friction on his own purely secular nature; the bonds which fray and lacerate Brand sit on him like comfortable clothing :

'It's all so easy ! Faith, you see,  
Broad based upon authority ;  
Which being upon learning stay'd  
May be implicitly obey'd ;  
While Rule and Ritual leave no doubt  
How faith ought to be acted out.'

And as the Church is subservient to the State, so religion has its narrowly limited province in life. To consecrate the whole of

life would be a waste of religious resources calculated for just one-seventh of it. For

‘Life and Faith hold such dissent,  
They only thrive when kept apart ;  
Six days for toiling hands are meant,  
The seventh, for stirring of the heart ;  
If all the week we preach’d and pray’d  
The Sabbath had in vain been made.’

But in spite of his mechanical system, the Dean shares the ‘Humanity’ of the age. His bigotry is absolute, but it does not go deep. He never dreams of doubting the faith he has prospered by ; but he advances its claims with urbanity and decorum as a man of the world, and is visibly disturbed by the scornful epigrams with which alone Brand condescends to answer him. And his moral rigour dissolves at once under the influence of fear. ‘I am no formalist, my friend,’ he assures the Mayor, after hearing of the politic lie by which the latter has just quelled the popular revolt ; and assents readily to his thoroughly ‘humane’ defence :

‘To-morrow,  
When agitation’s dead or dying,  
What will it matter if the end  
Was gain’d by telling truth, or lying?’

Ibsen, in truth, hated the system represented by the Dean too vigorously to allow it fair play, and the stoutest Nonconformist can afford to admit that this sleek and soulless ecclesiastic, with his vacant rhetoric, his pusillanimity, his credulity, and his Epicureanism, is a weed which grows lustily in the soil of established Churches rather than their normal product. The character is highly amusing; but it is such a picture as Milton might have given of one of his 'hireling wolves whose gospel is their maw,' had he been able to forego his magnificence of touch, and to bring humour into the service of his scorn.

## V

Into this society of half-heartedness and compromise suddenly emerges Brand, a 'holy athlete,' like Dante's Dominic—the prophet of a new gospel and of a new God.<sup>1</sup> His gospel is the iron Will which a humane age had emasculated in the name of Christian love; and his God is the implacable Jehovah of the Hebrews,

<sup>1</sup> The name Brand means 'fire.' It is used colloquially, like our 'firebrand,' of a man who excites passion and uproar. It hardly exists as an actual surname.



the Lord, 'young like Hercules,' who 'stayed the sun,' and stood by Moses on Horeb, who

' Wonders without end has done,  
And wonders without end would do,  
Were not the age grown sick—like you.'

With the boldness of Elijah before the priests of Baal he contrasts with this virile God the 'doting greybeard' of the popular belief, who 'looks through his fingers' at sin, and can always be 'haggled with' for a pardon. 'Faint-heart' and 'Light-heart' and 'Wild-heart' alike, genial impulse and dull routine, the thralldom of custom and the thralldom of pleasure, he confronts with the summons: 'Be through and through, what God meant you to become!'

The character was no doubt originally intended to be simply an embodiment of Ibsen's own heroic ideal of character. Brand is a priest of modern Norway. But Ibsen has himself declared that this was not at all essential for his purpose. 'I could have applied the whole syllogism just as well,' he writes to Georg Brandes, 'to a sculptor, or a politician, as to a priest. I could quite as well have worked out the impulse which drove me to

write, by taking Galileo, for instance, as my hero—assuming, of course, that Galileo should stand firm and never concede the fixity of the earth;—or you yourself in your struggle with the Danish reactionaries.’<sup>1</sup> The gist of the whole is therefore ethical, in spite of its theological clothing, and in spite of the theological phraseology in which Ibsen’s own ethical conceptions were as yet habitually entangled. The faith which inspires it is the faith in the spirit of man—‘the one eternal thing,’ as Brand declares in a splendid outburst, that of which churches and creeds are only passing moods, and which, now dispersed and disintegrated among the torsos of humanity, shall one day gather once more into a whole, and Man become again the glorious heir and child of God.<sup>2</sup> That faith in ‘spirit’ I take to be the keynote of Ibsen’s whole teaching; the ground of his scorn both for the ‘materialist’ and for the politician. The problems of life reduce themselves, for him, to the one problem: how to give spirit scope. Applied to individual men, this becomes the command

<sup>1</sup> First published by Brandes in his *Gjennembrudtsmænd*; partially quoted by Jæger, *H. Ibsen* (Eng. Tr. p. 155).

<sup>2</sup> Tr. p. 26.

—the divine ‘call’ of each :—Give your own spirit scope ; let your life be the working-out of your character, not the product of your circumstances ; *be what you are ; fulfil yourself*. This ideal, variously expressed and variously qualified, pervades Ibsen’s whole work.<sup>1</sup>

In the *Comedy of Love* (1862), the ‘self’ is conceived as a kind of ideal stamp impressed upon each soul by God at birth, which it is its ‘call’ to realise in life. ‘Just this is freedom,’ says Falk to Svanhild, ‘to perfectly fulfil one’s call.’ And this, alas, is what marriage makes impossible. Lind has a ‘call’ to go as a missionary to America, and Anna, his betrothed, a ‘call’ to remain at home. Love leads each forthwith to accept the call of the other ; and the experienced Fröken Skjære sums up incisively : ‘Follow his call ? Good heavens ! That is what men do as bachelors ; but an engaged man only follows his *bride*.’ In the *Pretenders* (1863) the basis of the whole action is Håkon’s divine ‘call’ to be king ; while to ‘doubt your call’ or to mistake it, is

<sup>1</sup> Several suggestions in what follows are due to a valuable essay by Arne Löchen, *Om den udvikling Ibsens moralske anskuelse har gennemgået* (Nyt Tidsskrift, 1882, p. 412 f.).

the tragic lot of Skule, as later of Julian. *Peer Gynt*, again (1867), is entirely built upon the problem of 'being yourself.' Here it becomes clear that 'being oneself,' with Ibsen, is the very antithesis of 'selfishness.' For Peer, after practising every kind of self-indulgence with success through life, finds that he is merely a bundle of impulses with no personality at the core. 'To be oneself,' the redoubtable Button-moulder tells him, 'is to lose oneself'; and he adds, for Peer's better understanding, the further definition: 'To be oneself is to stand forth everywhere with Master's intention hung out like a sign-board.'<sup>1</sup>

Brand thus stands on purely Ibsenian ground when he preaches, as he does on almost every page, 'Be yourself,' and when he means by that essentially a triumph, as we might prefer to say, of character over impulse and over circumstance.<sup>2</sup> Will thus becomes the very

<sup>1</sup> *Peer Gynt*, tr. by W. and C. Archer, p. 261.

<sup>2</sup> Wergeland had expressed the ideal, 'Be yourself' in a little poem which reads like a prelude to *Brand* ('Efter tidens Leilighed'). This is the close:

'Vær i et og alt dig selv!  
Det er sejrens kunst, min sjæl!  
Som Stefanen mellem stene  
Må du stå, om selv alene.'

d

essence of moral advance, and he urges its claim with Carlylean vehemence. Will, with him, stands above all calculation of possibilities. 'That you had not power may be pardoned, but never that you had not will.' Brand crosses the misty glacier and the raging fjord by Will, as Björnson's saintly mesmerist by Faith.<sup>1</sup> But Will is commonly conceived as self-sacrifice rather than as self-assertion; its business is to crush down all the rebellious desires that impede the 'inner self.' It is true that when we ask what the inner self is, and how a man is to distinguish that element in his nature which he has to 'fulfil' from that which he has to crush, Ibsen's replies are vague and conflicting. At times he seems to identify the self with the morally best impulse; as in the words of Lona Hessel to Bernick after his confession: 'There at last you have found yourself,' and his reply: 'Thanks, Lona, you have saved what was best in me.' But at other times it is simply the deepest rooted impulse, the bias of character, or what Pope called the 'ruling passion.' 'Be what you are,' cries Brand to Einar, 'whatever

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Björnson's striking creation Sang in *Over Ævne*.

it is, but be it out and out. If you tittle, be a Bacchante at once; if you serve pleasure, serve it heart and soul.' In any case Ibsen puts the strong will first, and mere good impulse second,<sup>1</sup>—and his teaching is summed up in the demand: Make your life heroic by pervading it with a single aim.

These ideas have often been compared to the teaching of Fichte. But there is nothing to show that Ibsen ever grasped the idealist conception of the relation between the 'Ego' and the 'world,' upon which the whole of Fichte's metaphysic was founded. All other resemblances are necessarily superficial. If he preached Will with the energy of Fichte, it is because in this quality of character he bears a singular resemblance to a thinker, of whose writings (as he expressly avowed to me) he had 'so far as he knew, never read a line.'

'I have never,' Ibsen added, 'specially con-

<sup>1</sup> 'The weak man, taking his object at any time from the desire which happens to affect him most strongly, cannot possibly be a good man. Concentration of will does not necessarily mean goodness, but is a necessary condition of goodness.' T. H. Green, *Proleg. of Ethics*, II. 1, §105. The whole chapter expresses, in precise and subtle language, the conceptions of will and self which I take Ibsen to have in view.

cerned myself with philosophy as such. I have studied men and human fate, and drawn the philosophy out of them for myself.'

## VI.

'I pride myself on the objectivity of my Brand,' Ibsen has somewhere said, justly enough. But it is the objectivity of a mask which conveys, in heightened profile, one out of several expressions of the face it conceals. Brand is Ibsen reduced, if one may say so, to simpler terms, and at the same time raised to a higher power. His impulses are less complex; but they are translated into action with a single-minded vehemence which makes the total effect completely different. The core of Brand's thought is thoroughly Ibsenian, but the dialect he clothes it in, the impetuous energy and eloquence with which he enforces it, and, to a great extent, the practical applications he makes of it, are alien to Ibsen.

Something, but not very much, of the non-Ibsenian Brand was due to vivid reminiscence. The rigid orthodoxy of the Scandinavian Churches in the middle of the century had given rise to several independent movements outwardly resembling Brand's. In Denmark

a genial and powerful thinker, Søren Kierkegaard, found the current orthodoxy too narrow for him, and thundered at the Church in inexhaustible diatribes of mingled wit, poetry, and philosophy.<sup>1</sup> At Ibsen's own early home,

<sup>1</sup> Particular thoughts of Kierkegaard strikingly recall Brand; as the very title of his *Enten—Eller* ('Either—Or') suggests Brand's way of planting men face to face with an unavoidable dilemma: 'At the crossway stand'st thou: choose!' The following (partially quoted by Brandes) also recalls the Button-moulder in *Peer Gynt*: 'Let others,' he there says (i. 13), 'complain that the Age is evil: I complain that it is feeble; for it is without passion. . . . The thoughts of men's hearts are too petty to be sinful. . . . They fancy God does not keep accounts so strictly but they can befool him a little and get off scot-free. Baseness! Therefore I always turn to the Old Testament and to Shakespeare. There one feels, after all, that it is *men* that speak; *there* they hate, *there* they love, murder their enemies, curse their offspring through all generations, *there* they sin.' This and similar obvious parallels to Brand's thinking led the Danish critics to assume as a matter of course that Brand was intended as a portrait of him: and the idea was widely accepted in Germany. Much industrious speculation in a little contemporary volume: 'Björnson og Ibsen i deres to seneste Værker' [*Brand* and *De Nygifte*], by E. Helveg (Kbhvn, 1866) is vitiated by it. But Kierkegaard had an element of the purely intellectual athlete which is quite foreign to Brand. He delighted in problems with Socratic eagerness, for the sake of thinking, heedless whether the conclusion tasted sweet or not. As he playfully says: 'I am like the Lüneburger hog: I can grub up truffles for others, but have no pleasure in them myself. I take the problems on my nose; but then I have done with them, and toss them over my head.'—(*Ib.* i. 23.) Cf. also Jæger, *H. Ibsen*, p. 155 f.



Skien, his friend Gustav A. Lammers had separated from the Church on a purely doctrinal question, and founded one of those 'free Apostolic communities' which in Norway commonly exist on almost as frail a tenure as Brand's own forlornly magnificent 'Church of Life' itself. Lammers is one of the most striking figures in the modern Norwegian Church, and his career and personality were undoubtedly present to Ibsen when he wrote *Brand*. Many single traits reappear. He had planned and built his own Church; spoke with impetuous and fiery eloquence, 'using the strongest expressions known to Christian speech,' and denouncing sin with an energy which terrified yet fascinated his people.<sup>1</sup> One of the incidents of his ministry was the building of a supplementary chapel (*Bedehus*), the original church being 'too small.' But his secession turned upon specifically Christian questions, such as 'infant-baptism,' which for

<sup>1</sup> Lammers had previously been chaplain in a reformatory at Trondhjem. It is said that many of his parishioners (naïvely enough) begged him to remember that he was no longer preaching to criminals. I take this and other details from a series of articles on Lammers by his friend Provst Ording (in the Skien paper *Fremskridt*, Aug. 19, etc., 1893). His life is sketched by Jæger, Tr. p. 156.

Brand, as for Ibsen, hardly existed at all; and the whole movement, which ended a year later in Lammers' return, revolved within the narrow pale of the evangelical world, of which Brand from the first stands clear.

Brand's theology is indeed that of no existing Church. To attack the established religions in the name of religion implied the possession of a form of faith uncontaminated by that conversion into an organised fact which, for Ibsen, is so deadly to all ideals.<sup>1</sup> With felicitous instinct Ibsen divined the religion of all others most capable of fusion with his own thought; and the doctrine of self-fulfilment emerged from Brand's lips clothed in the fire and gloom of Hebrew prophecy. His eloquence, his scorn, his grim humour even, are those of Elijah. A lonely and loveless childhood has dried up all the natural tenderness of his nature. Love means

<sup>1</sup> Cf. his eccentric expression to Brandes in regard to freedom: 'I must say, the only thing I love about freedom is the struggle for it; for the possession I don't care.' More seriously: 'Whoever possesses freedom otherwise than as something he strives for, possesses it as a dead and soulless thing? . . . If any one stops during the struggle, and cries, Now I have it! he shows by the very fact that he has lost it.'—Brandes, *Moderne Geister*, pp. 433-4.

for him the disposition of God towards those whom He chastens. To Christianity, the 'humane' religion, with its compassion for sinners and its various expedients, so easily abused, for removing the burden of sin, he feels himself instinctively alien. 'I hardly know whether I am a Christian.' Christ is for him the heroic martyr rather than the Redeemer; man has to redeem himself by crucifying his own flesh. To pray for pardon is to offer payment on easy terms for sin. To watch for Divine grace is to ignore the demand for human will.

But to follow out any one course rigorously involves more Will, calls more 'Spirit' into play, than to follow several partially. Hence we reach Brand's paradox, that to 'sacrifice' less than All is worse than to sacrifice Nothing, and the terrible formula, *All or Nothing*, with which he 'pierces the bosom' of a 'humane' and compromising age. The formula is thus, in spite of its intensely theological colouring, a product of ethical and not of theological ideas. To fall short of absolute service is no doubt infidelity to God; but the root of Brand's fierce denunciation of it is that it is infidelity to character.

## VII

A doctrine such as 'All or Nothing' obviously lent itself to the most extreme fanaticism. But the quality of the fanaticism depended altogether on the spirit in which this rigid and absolute formula was applied to the actual world of growing, relative, and imperfect life.

The demand for 'No compromise' may be deadly enough if it is made to mean: 'Throw away the seed because it is not the flower.' And this is at the outset and at the close the peremptory method of Brand. 'Turn your faces utterly from the light,' he cries to the peasants who are dimly feeling after the heroic ideal of which he has given them a glimpse; 'be wholly men of clay!' His religion is not for gropers and crawlers; its imperious demands can only be satisfied by men in the vigour and freshness of youth. 'No man hobbles through heaven's gate. . . . What should God do with effete cripples grovelling about His throne?' Let them get down into the grave-vault with their pestiferous sighs for the mercy they have forfeited; but come ye, men and women with the bloom still upon

your cheek, to the great Church of Life. Thus interpreted, Brand's 'All or Nothing' excludes not only the Christian reverence for that which is beneath us, but the very conception of spiritual growth altogether. It is a religion of heroism for those who are heroes already; the natural birthright of great souls, inaccessible to the dim humanity which stands in most need of inspiration. And yet Brand himself holds that the Divine image is set in the heart of every man, and that it is the end of all to *live it clear*.

But this interpretation of the formula undergoes a change, and that under the influence of one who heroically accepts it, and who becomes at last its willing martyr. Agnes has all Brand's valour without his absoluteness; she dares and wills with him, but she has also the woman's insight and tenderness, the patience with small beginnings, the instinctive forefeeling of the flower in the seed. It is her gift to 'divine great things in the small'; as he finely and significantly says of her, she can 'clasp earth and heaven in one embrace, like the tree's spreading roof of leaves.' Her companionship wakes the human love that slept in him, and

through loving her he comes to love the struggling peasant-folks about him. He abandons his dream of a world-warfare in order to labour obscurely in a remote mountain nook. All comers share in the rich banquet of his heart. Those who only half see are no longer bidden turn utterly away from the light. Nay, it is his most grievous charge against his rival, the Mayor, that he crushes the unfulfilled germs of character, the 'seed that might have ripened into deed.'<sup>1</sup> He still hurls his anathema at the compromiser, but with an inner longing to clasp the bosom he rends. His conception of the relation of religion to life insensibly changes. The vulgar division between the sacred and profane is now to be met by hallowing, not by extruding, the common things. Officialdom stands aghast at a creed which, as the Mayor bluntly puts it, tries to make religion and potato-growing fuse inextricably together, and keeps the festal flag flying on week days as persistently

'As if the Almighty were on board  
Of every skiff that skims the fjord.'

Thus Brand's vision of the ideal Church

<sup>1</sup> Tr. p. 113.

expands into that magnificent picture of the 'Church of Life,' which is to include 'all that by God's leave lives indeed,' in nature and humanity,—labour and joy, faith and action, 'daily drudgery made one with the dance before the Ark.'<sup>1</sup> He anticipates that far-off 'Third Kingdom' foreshadowed in *Caesar and Galilean*, where the Pagan religion of nature and the Christian religion of spirit are harmonised and consummated in one all-embracing faith.

Gradually, Brand's thought penetrates and possesses the community; first 'the best' are with him (Act III.), and then (Act IV.) also 'the most.' With them it takes a form for which Brand is unprepared. The little tumble-down church might serve for a decayed religion, content to occupy its consecrated corner of life, and to abandon the rest. But a religion which 'is that magnificent thing that fills the whole of life'<sup>2</sup> could not be housed in such limits. On all sides, blind, inarticulate instinct impels the cry, 'The church is small.' Agnes herself, though she also cannot explain

<sup>1</sup> Tr. pp. 231-4.

<sup>2</sup> Canon Knox Little at the last Church Congress.

her impulse, shares in the cry. And Brand, for whom the visible symbol of his Church has little importance, nevertheless yields to his faith in her inspiration, and prepares (like Lammers) to 'build the greater church' which is to symbolise more adequately the limitless Church of Life.

This church-building motive may at first strike the reader as disturbingly prosaic amid the passion and poetry of *Brand*. As with all Ibsen's other examples of architectural symbolism, however (and surely no dramatist was ever so great a builder of churches, lunatic asylums, and 'dwellings for men'), a little study shows that the prosaic nucleus is imbedded in a network of subtle and suggestive meanings.<sup>1</sup>

It is thus Agnes who keeps the humaner point of view vigorous in Brand, and apparently turns his formula of elimination, as Mr. Wicksteed aptly terms it, into a formula of harmony. Yet the formula in its old

<sup>1</sup> Brand's church-building has another aspect, not touched here; it is his way of cancelling the 'debt' of his mother, whose fortune 'to the last penny,' he spends in the work. Similarly, Fru Alving (in *Ghosts*) builds her asylum with the exact sum for which she had been 'bought.'



exclusive sense is never really put by. Within a few pages of his admission that he owes all the new tenderness of his nature to the presence of wife and child, occur his bitterest denunciations of 'what man calls love,' 'word of all words most smirched with lies.'<sup>1</sup> And Agnes herself is powerless against the terrible formula when it is confronted with a case where love seems to set up claims against God. He is inflexible to his dying mother when she gives up only nine-tenths of her treasured wealth. He is inflexible, though after a far fiercer struggle, to his child, when the 'call' of fatherhood comes in conflict with the call of the priest. He is inflexible to his broken-hearted wife herself, when he leads her to that dizzy height of heroism in which she 'willingly' crushes the heart of motherhood in her without which even her heroic nature cannot live. And he is inflexible to himself, when he yields up 'life and light to the grave.' 'Only the Lost is for ever ours' is his cry after their last good-night. Yet he is soon to find that the Lost is, still, very really—lost. Deprived of Agnes' presence, he loses his sympathy with

<sup>1</sup> Tr. p: 91.

groping and struggling humanity, returns to his rigorous exclusiveness, and becomes again 'a lonely warrior,' fighting now without heart or hope a forlorn battle with the world. The opening of the new church assembles about him whatever was most provocative to a man of his temper in the little world of Norway. The crowd with their idle wonder at 'the show,' the Mayor with his fulsome congratulations and distinctions, the Dean with his intolerable claim in the name of Caesar to the things of God, the universal assumption that the new building is the real Church and not its symbol,—the 'cacklings and croakings' that answer all his questionings, while even the two lonely resources of music and prayer fail,—the organ's song becomes a shriek, and his cry to God 'falls back broken like the moan of a river bell';—all these things stir him to the depths. To serve a Church and State so conditioned is incompletely to serve God, and is thus compromise, and the devil. The All or Nothing asserts itself in all its rigour as a formula of elimination, not of harmony. To Brand's fanatical imagination the whole apparatus of ordered society now presents itself,

not as material which can be made to 'coalesce' with religion, but as an irreducible alien element by which religion can only be warped and corrupted. To recur to 'the Mayor's drastic image, 'potato-growing' will no longer be assimilated to the 'All,' and must therefore be rejected as a 'Nothing.'

He revokes his gift of the church, throws the keys into the river, and carries the multitude away in an access of inarticulate enthusiasm to seek that 'great Church of life,' which, having no limits, can involve no 'compromise.' They are to wander through the land, to 'loose every fettered soul,' to 'crush every vestige of sloth,' to make the whole realm 'a vaulted temple.' But the enterprise meets the fate of all attempts to purify religion by cutting it adrift from everything which is not religious; and Brand, stoned and deserted, finds a last refuge, not in the 'Church of life,' but in that Ice-church which is the negation of all human relations,—of the very stuff out of which life has to be carved. He grasps his weapon—the formula—as boldly as ever, but he has only the empty air to strike with it. His heroic repudiation of love has brought him

logically to the home of the desolate and desolating forces of nature—the haunt of the savage and loveless Gerd. Scorn for ‘humanity’ has finally thrust him out of the work of uplifting Man. Plainly, for one who had planned as his life’s work the ‘refashioning of Man’ in God’s image, this cannot be self-fulfilment. ‘To fulfil oneself,’ and ‘to be a tablet for God’s law,’ have become irreconcilable aims. One of them must be abandoned. With the gladness of renewed youth Brand revokes the All or Nothing. ‘Henceforth his life shall be not a rigid tablet for God’s law, but a ‘poem, rich, flexible, free.’

‘Compromise’ is thus on the point of being accepted. The hawk, which at two former moments of waning resolutions had appeared to him, flutters into the vault of the deadly Ice-church, where it had never ventured before. But it is now too late to turn. The hawk is shot by Gerd, and rolls down at her feet, ‘white like a dove.’ The demon compromise was, after all, akin to love. Cut off alike from advance and retreat, Brand can only perish, and the snows of lifeless and loveless nature, loosened by the shot, descend upon the man

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who had hated in the name of love, and slain out of very passion for life.

## VIII

Thus Brand falls, and the cloud of symbolism which surrounds his fall does not prevent our perceiving that its principal ground is the formula All or Nothing. Whether it is in so far, in Ibsen's eyes, a glorious martyrdom or a tragic penalty for error, is a different question, which for the moment we put aside. But it is equally clear that the formula is not its only ground; and there are persistent hints of an influence which leads us into a totally different sphere of Ibsen's thought.

‘Blood of children must be spilt  
To atone their fathers’ guilt’

groans Brand, as the avalanche roars above him. And the avalanche is the work of Gerd. Gerd, who, as we have seen, stands for the loveless isolation towards which Brand's development thrusts him on, thus becomes also the involuntary Nemesis which closes it,—in atonement not of any fault of Brand's, but of ‘the fathers’ guilt.’ The meaning of this is

explained by the Mayor's story,<sup>1</sup> and the very harshness and violence of the invention shows how eager Ibsen was to work in his thought at all costs, to entangle his idealist in the consequences not only of his own imperfect grasp of truth, and not only of the provocative conditions under which he is called to live, but of the sins of his own kindred in the past. Gerd is the child of a 'scholar-gipsy,' who, as a poor parson, had been rejected on mercenary grounds by Brand's mother, though she loved him. This sacrifice of 'soul' to gain, Brand's jealous Lord avenges on her posterity; and Gerd, the indirect fruit of it, becomes a factor in that vengeance. At the crisis of the Third Act, it is her mockery which recalls Brand to his half-abandoned formula, and dooms his 'spotless lamb' to the sacrifice it had all but escaped. The death of the child leads to that of the wife, and their loss leaves him a prey to the 'All or Nothing' in all its naked rigour. In the crisis of the Fifth Act, Gerd only carries this intervention a step further. Thus the 'vengeance' takes the form of an influence

<sup>1</sup> Tr. p. 160.

which, like that of the witches upon Macbeth, simply reinforces those elements in his own nature which made for ruin. Gerd turns the balance, when it trembles, between Will and Love.

The story of Gerd is only one of the indications in *Brand* that Ibsen was approaching those problems of inheritance which dominate the 'Social dramas.' 'Can I help being what I am?' asks the gipsy in the Fourth Act.<sup>1</sup> The spectacle of the young children of the murderer drinking in the poison of the deed they have witnessed,<sup>2</sup> plunges Brand into an abyss of questioning, from which he emerges only with a horrible sense that to live at all is to be involved in an infinite tangle of guilt. In none of these cases does Ibsen actually face the problem of heredity. But it is plain that it lies near at hand. They are symptoms of the coming conflict between the view of the early dramas that Character is shaped and stamped by God, and that of the later, that it is a function of ancestry. The power of self-determination is still everywhere assumed, and Will still ranges along in magnificent freedom

<sup>1</sup> Tr. p. 176.

<sup>2</sup> Tr. p. 53 f.

(‘as if shot from a pistol,’ as Hegel said), innocent of the suspicion which Maximus is presently to express, that ‘to will is to have to will’;<sup>1</sup> but already there are frequent glimpses of a totally different point of view, from which Life loses this semblance of heroic simplicity, and appears a tangle of interrelated influences, in whose intricate action and reaction all distinct character tends to disappear.<sup>2</sup>

## IX

It is impossible to read the closing Acts of Brand without feeling that the poet is struggling between two ethical ideals, both of which have a powerful hold upon his nature, and that neither influence absolutely masters the other. The man who wrote: ‘The State crushes individuality; away with the State! . . . Let free will and spiritual affinity be the only recognised basis of union,’ unmistakably felt the profound sympathy for Brand in his final revolt, which seems to burn through the page, and is apt to touch even the coolest reader with revolutionary passion. But it is

<sup>1</sup> *Emperor and Galilean*, tr. Archer, p. 352.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. esp. tr. p. 122.



equally clear that he feels that Brand has in some sense missed his way. Not because he is finally ruined, for 'overthrow,' as he repeatedly tells us, is the condition of 'triumph,' and in the last pages the 'overthrow' of Christ is explicitly recalled. But because he has foregone the sympathetic love without which no man can divine what 'self-fulfilment,' in Ibsen's sense, for himself or for others demands. Loving love and hating hate, he has nevertheless 'willed to hate,'<sup>1</sup> and, unquickenened by sympathetic insight, his ideal of sacrifice degenerates, as every ideal must, into a mechanical rule. 'Become a tablet for God to write on' comes at last to mean, not 'seek what God intended you to be, and be it,' but 'clear away everything purely human in you, that God's writing may be seen,'—and then Brand himself takes as it were the pencil out of the hand of God, and writes in his name—simply the same negative and inhuman formula over again. We never get further than this mechanical conception of God's will, and the 'All or Nothing' comes to stand (as in the case of his Mother) rather for an opera-

<sup>1</sup> Tr. p. 92.

tion in arithmetic—a sum in subtraction more or less well carried through—than for a spiritual process.

Brand has, in a word, put himself on the side of men of system he abhors, and with subtle irony Ibsen shows us this by bringing them before us, one after another, each with his characteristic profession of faith, a parody of what was weakest in Brand's own. Brand's scorn for Love reappears 'writ small' in the Schoolmaster's horror at being thought to 'feel'; his rigid suppression of human nature in the name of God's law is travestied in the Dean's suppression of personality in the name of the State; and the final and most deadly parody is provided, as Mr. Wicksteed has admirably shown, by Einar, for whom his narrow creed is 'All' and the rest Nothing. 'The principle that slays the saintly Agnes and drives her heroic husband mad, fits the miserable Einar like a glove; he is happy and at home in it.'<sup>1</sup>

Ibsen has been called the 'poet of doubt.' But his 'doubt' is as like the complacent indecision of the ordinary agnostic as the brief

<sup>1</sup> *Lectures*, p. 50.

repose of a ship just balanced on the shoulders of two great waves is like that of one riding in a smooth and glassy stream. It is an uneasy equilibrium between vehemently contending impulses,—the one more deeply-rooted in passion and temperament, the other in intellect, the one expressed with more genius, the other with more conviction. It is impossible to ignore, under the philosophic and cosmopolitan surface of Ibsen's nature, a core of pure revolutionary fire,—an element of defiant, tameless, solitary, unsocial power, sometimes cynical, as in the grim close of *På Vidderne*, sometimes ardent and heroic. As one reads the passionate invectives of Brand, even at the points where he is most palpably in the grip of his formula, one seems to hear the poet's undertone, 'Yes, he is going to his ruin, and to the ruin of his work,—no doubt about that ; but then, to have this Titanic world-defying Will, that dares all things and endures all things, is so glorious that all the ruin matters less than the loss of it. To act with a nice regard to the services you are likely to render is good, but it is a good which appeals chiefly to our prosaic sense of utility. There is another kind

which seizes us through the imagination and the instinct for poetry,—the glory of heroic character,—do what it will, end where and how it will. If it is forced at last to isolation, then, you know, ‘the strongest man upon earth is he that stands most alone.’ If it perishes, then ‘Death is not Overthrow,’ and ‘True triumph is to lose,’ and ‘only what is lost is our own for ever.’ If it goes down at last into the darkness, then that is the very way to eternal peace :

‘Nej, i dybet må jeg ned,  
Der er fred fra evighed.’<sup>1</sup>

But this volcanic and irresponsible element in Ibsen has always been met, and to a large degree controlled, on the one hand by a very keen, cool, and critical intellect, incessantly probing and questioning its own impulses; and, on the other, by a vein of sympathetic, tender, almost feminine emotion. He has never, indeed, been conspicuously a poet of love. The ‘little wing’ of his ideal castle of poetry which was to be consecrated to love-lyrics was shattered long ago.<sup>2</sup> But the genius

<sup>1</sup> *Bergmanden*.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the subtle little poem *Byggeplaner*, and Mr. Wicksteed’s comments (*Lectures*, p. 2).

of the love-lyric must have sighed as it fell, for no living poet has sung of love, when he chose, with more thrilling power. He grew up in the traditions of Romanticism. He has satirised the Romantics without mercy. But he has never ceased on certain points to be one of them. The cynicism of *På Vidderne* was the violent protest of a poet still under the spell of Romanticism against the ideals he could not forego. At present he is Romantic by his symbolism, by that delight in dreamy and fantastic motives which so sorely perplexes the reader who thinks he has to do with a plain, honest 'Realist,' who 'draws things as they are.' And the Romantic idealisation of love, as the noblest and most potent force in life, had a hold upon him at the time when he was still enthralled by the purely Romantic ideal of a drama full of ringing rhymes which he fulfilled in *Brand* and *Peer Gynt*. But over against Love stood Will, and so long as Society remains pervaded by low ideals, the question of their relationship is for Ibsen a standing dilemma, from which he never unequivocally escapes. If a man's social environment is incompatible with wholeness of life, if State and Church force him

into soul-slaying 'compromise,' resolute revolt seems to be the only course open to him, even though he perish in solitude, and find the all-encompassing Church of Life only in the desolate and deadly Church of Ice. But against this solution the opposing instincts are for ever raising their quiet protest: Love is needful to self-fulfilment, and can rear the Church of Life even out of the straw and chaff of a seemingly unideal society. The one answer is given in a passionate cry, the other in a whisper of conviction. The readers of *Brand* for the most part heard the cry and ignored the whisper; and the poet of *Brand* intended that they should.

## X

Almost all Ibsen's work has something of the same complexity. His most vehement teaching is apt to be coupled with the materials for criticising it. His most definite and dominant thoughts come to the surface laden with that tangle of counter-thought which gathers about every peremptory conclusion in the depths of a critical mind. There is suggestive truth under the guise of truism, in his

declaration in the interesting preface to *Gildet på Solhaug* (2nd ed., 1883), that each of his writings has been 'the necessary outcome of his development at a given moment.' Each is in some sense an epitome of his intellectual consciousness. Hence, too, the difficulty of defining their artistic character.

The early critics of *Brand* spent much ink and not a little temper in the attempt to find a proper pigeon-hole for it in the scheme of literary categories. One of the ablest of them wrote a series of papers to prove that it was a 'Satire.'<sup>1</sup> He was met by a formal demonstration that it was a 'Tragedy.'<sup>2</sup> Vinje compared it to the *Dunciad*, and declared that he had only begun to enjoy it when he discovered it to be a 'parody of what the English call Sensationalism.'<sup>3</sup> Its author described it with judicious vagueness as a 'dramatic poem.'<sup>4</sup> The controversy was, however, no mere dis-

<sup>1</sup> Prof. M. J. Monrad, in *Morgenbladet*, 1866, Nos. 248 f.

<sup>2</sup> *Morgenbladet*, 1866, Nos. 332, 335.

<sup>3</sup> *Skrifter i Uival*, iv. 86 f.

<sup>4</sup> It was, as Jæger says, not originally designed to be dramatic. In answer to an inquiry about this early version, Ibsen replied: 'I wrote at the outset 3—4 sheets in narrative verse, but soon threw them aside. They are destroyed, and have not been used in the complete poem.'

pute about terms: it sprang from the very ambiguity which we have just described. If 'Satire' can include a drastic exposure of national failings, set off by an ideal antitype, and 'Tragedy,' a picture of the ruin of a great but defective character in an antagonistic world, *Brand* has obvious affinities to both. It is difficult not to suspect that the 'satiric' motive was dominant at the outset, and was gradually overpowered by the 'tragic,' which, as has been seen, presides at the close.

Brand was to be the ideal antitype of the Norwegian people. But Ibsen's own complexity of nature, as we have seen, and perhaps also his keen dramatic instinct, interfered with this simple scheme. The ideal type grew human and individual; the Titan going forth with drawn sword against the world became a struggling and agonised soul, swayed by doubts and entangled by illusion; the vices he denounces are represented by men, drawn mostly with a genial and humorous, and in the case of the 'humane' old Doctor with a kindly and sympathetic hand. The beautiful creation of Agnes serves the purpose of Satire admirably in the Second Act, where her



heroism is set off against the 'faintheartedness' of the Peasants and Einar; but in the Third and Fourth Acts she has passed into the domain of Tragedy; her heroism is no longer an example hurled at the cringing patriots of '64, but a pathetic sacrifice to the idol which holds her husband in its spell. Thus the tragedy of Brand, the man, struggling in the grip of his formula, disengages itself from the 'satire' of Brand, the Titan, subduing the world to his creed.

It will hardly be denied that such tragedy is 'tragic' in the great Shakespearean sense. The Norwegian priest is tortured by problems as unlike those which baffle Hamlet or Brutus as the simple peasant-world by the solemn fjord-side is unlike the Machiavellian court of Elsinore or the imperial pomp of Rome. But the entire contrast of colour and setting throws the inner affinity into relief. The fatal flaw in each is rooted in that which makes him great. Hamlet's power of resolve is depleted by the restless discursiveness of his intellect; Brand's failure in sympathetic insight hangs together with his peremptory self-assertion. And *Hamlet*, above all the other great tragic

characters of literature, is drawn with that profound and intimate personal sympathy, blended with clear perception of defect, which we have recognised in *Brand*. In him also, as a century of critical warfare abundantly witnesses, there is the apparent ambiguity which that blending of apparently opposite standpoints is likely to produce. Unless appearances wholly deceive, Shakespeare drew in *Hamlet* the triumph of impulses which agitated without dominating his own nature; and it may be that he could have adopted the significant words in which Ibsen, some years after the completion of *Brand*, wrote of it to a friend: '*Brand* came about as the result of something I had *lived through*, . . . I felt it necessary to free myself through poetic forms from something which I had inwardly done with.'<sup>1</sup> It is just this struggle with a deep-rooted and passionate impulse of which he saw the limitations that explains the ambiguity of *Brand*.

Whatever its tragic quality, however, *Brand* has no pretensions to compact dramatic struc-

<sup>1</sup> Laura Kieler, *Silhouetter* (1887), p. 10; quoted by Halvorsen, *Norsk. Forf.-lex.* u.s.

ture. Its 'plot' is a series of stories connected by a single thread, the pervading personality of Brand himself. Long intervals of time separate the various incidents; Agnes meets Brand a stranger in the First Act: in the last, the grave of his wife and child is already green. The First Act is a brilliant overture rather than a commencement of the actual business of the poem. The Third and Fourth Acts can be detached, without grave violence, from the larger story of which they contain the tragic crisis. And the Fifth Act, a third of the whole in bulk, is again a small drama in itself, the development of a social uprising through all its phases from triumph to collapse. Several of the scenes consist of prolonged discussions which leave little trace upon the subsequent action, and deal with topics not invariably exciting in themselves. Yet, in spite of all this, the poem has an intense and continuous interest. No competent reader of the original is likely to lay it down at any point with ease; and its arresting power is happily of a kind which the dullest of translators cannot wholly stifle, nor the most daring dissipate. One suspects at times that Ibsen has deliberately

strewn his course with obstacles in order to triumph over them. His wonderful command of dramatic motive makes his most purely theoretic colloquies interesting. A by no means very patient audience has been held by the long discussion *de rebus divinis* in the First Act. And when was a dispute, twenty pages long, over the question of building a church or a workhouse, made more instinct with dramatic movement, more alive with wit and humour, than is the central scene of Act IV. ? Such scenes, with all their prodigal and various power, may be reckoned mere *tours de force*. But how many others there are which derive their power from the simplest and strongest human emotions,—the passion of the mother for the child, of the husband for the wife ; or which appeal to instincts as simple, and only a little less strong,—the delight in daring, the inborn sympathy with greatness which no cynicism wholly quells, the cry of joy which is evoked from the ‘sleeping poet in man’ by the bold effort to make life ‘a poem,’ not mechanically evolved by the stress of petty needs, but heroically hewn and shaped by passion and will. The stirring scene which  
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opens the Second Act must appeal in a measure to readers who find neither truth nor savour in Brand's ideas. The scenes which close the Third and the Fourth Act are surely among the most poignant in the whole range of drama.

## XI

And the student of the original is at once arrested by the singular richness and power of the language and of the rhythmic form. The literary influences which surrounded Ibsen's early manhood had told mainly in the direction of bold, brilliant expression, of choice and polished verse. When he began his career at Christiania, as a shy, struggling provincial, in 1851, the great masters in vogue had all grown up in or been profoundly influenced by the Romantic school; and the traces of the Romantic ideals, 'fancy and irony,' were everywhere visible, in the cultivation of a rich and scintillating style, in wilful alternations of pathos and wit. At home there were Wergeland and Welhaven; the one an impetuous revolutionary, discharging torrents of disorderly but often splendid eloquence 'shot

through with lightning-gleams of thought,'<sup>1</sup> the other a clear-minded artist, chiselling his marble verse slowly towards perfect form. To Wergeland, as has been well said, a poem was a product of inspiration: to Welhaven the expression of 'a great clearness in the soul.' Neither had a trace of dramatic genius (though only Welhaven was quite aware of the fact), but both in their several ways were masters of a poetry of seductive brilliance. In Denmark, there was a group of accomplished poets, disciples of the German Romantics, inferior to them in intellectual range, but, as Brandes has justly insisted, superior in form,—Oehlen-schläger, Baggesen, Paludan-Müller, Heiberg. Finally, there was Young Germany, with its fermenting, revolutionary, unclear spirit embalmed in the poetry and prose of Heine. The influence of Heine was dominant with Ibsen's first literary associates,—the young poets Paul Botten Hansen and A. O. Vinje, who in 1851 joined him in editing the journal *Manden*. Vinje's *Ferdaminni*, as already hinted, is a kind of Norwegian *Reisebilder*, not less rich in poetry than Heine's, if poorer in wit. Among

<sup>1</sup> Lassen, *H. Wergeland*, p. 84.

Hansen's principal contributions were an essay on 'Young Germany,' and a novel, *Norske Mysterier*, the style of which, 'thridded with biting and disintegrating reflection, and scattered with allusions and quotations,'<sup>1</sup> is palpably Heinesque. To both these friends Ibsen owed much. In the next decade both the *Comedy of Love* and *Peer Gynt* were to bear striking traces of Hansen's most notable work, also contributed to *Manden*,—'The Witch-bridal' (*Huldrebryllupet*).<sup>2</sup> It has even been described as 'standing in a prototypic relation' to *Peer Gynt*.<sup>3</sup> A precursor of Styver, the copying-clerk in the *Comedy of Love*, has been found in Hansen's Jurist Karlsen. The sarcastic rhymes and voluble rhythms of *Peer Gynt* have also a palpable analogue in Hansen's play; and Ibsen even quotes one of his friend's couplets in his own text.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Daae, *P. Botten Hansen*, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> This little drama has a signal interest as a link between *Peer Gynt* and *Faust*, not hitherto noticed, so far as I know, by any English critic. A palpably Mephistophelean figure, Mester Hurtig, is the mouthpiece of cynicisms which re-appear in *Peer*.

<sup>3</sup> *Nordisk Conv. Lex.* i. 384.

<sup>4</sup> Hansen's epigram:

'thi Kjerligheden gjør Petrarker,  
som Fæ og Ladhed Patriarker.'

Cf. *Kjerlighedens Kom.* p. 23.

Ibsen had thus grown up in a school which on all hands fostered daring fancy, piquant mixture of grave and gay, striking and telling form. The whole scheme of *Brand* as a satiric tragedy exemplifies the second, its verse from beginning to end the third, and its poetic speech the first.

'I wanted a verse in which I could career where I would (*frei umtummeln*), as on horse-back,' Ibsen said to the present writer in the course of a discussion. And in his hands the common four-beat verse does indeed develop a versatility for which neither Scott nor Byron nor Butler nor Coleridge in the least prepares us. The nearest analogue is Browning's *Christmas Eve and Easter Day*, with its similar interchanges from homely realism to the dizziest heights of imaginative ecstasy. The immense wealth of Norwegian in double rhymes greatly adds to the flexibility of the measure. English has not very many rhymes which can be used in serious verse without risk of ruin in either the Scylla of the grotesque or the Charybdis of the namby-pamby. But the Norwegian double-rhyme can be witty and epigrammatic, or sonorous and rhetorical,



or lilted and pathetic. No doubt the use of rhyme of any kind in the dialogue of high-wrought passion is a violation of English dramatic tradition,—a shock to the faith in which most of us were brought up, that Dryden's vindication of rhymed tragedy was an essential blunder in principle, a gratuitous desertion of the one true way which Shakespeare once for all had shown. But Shakespeare's royal road was not necessarily the best for all feet. No student of Calderon would willingly detach the passion of his Herod and Mariene or of the *Alcalde de Zalamea* from the wonderful flights of on-rushing rhymes by which it is sped along. Had Victor Hugo been otherwise capable of writing *Lear*, we might have found that world-tragedy not unworthily clad in the magnificent Alexandrine of the *Légende des Siècles*. And, in a lowlier sphere, the stern, simple, penetrating pathos and passion of many an old Danish and Swedish ballad forcibly suggests the question: Why should not tragic drama avail itself of the forms traditionally consecrated to the record of all that stirred the popular heart, 'familiar matters of to-day,' as well as 'battles long ago'?

This question the Spaniards had answered by building up their whole drama out of the rhythms of their 'Romances.' The German Romantics had enthusiastically imitated them, and the Dane Heiberg, a gifted and versatile lyric poet, as well as a popular dramatist, wrote an entire drama—*Dristigt vovet halv er vundet*—in Calderonesque measures and style. Ibsen read no Spanish, and was probably not much affected by Heiberg's example, though he certainly knew his works. But he had been early struck by the capabilities of the ballad-form, as well as of the ballad-subject, and in his interesting and important essay 'on the heroic ballad and its value for poetic literature'<sup>1</sup> he explicitly proposes its use in drama. 'The heroic ballad is the one form of literature which has remained alive in the popular consciousness. . . . If a new subject is to appeal to the people, it must in some degree be old, must not be invented but resumed. . . . It is only through a national form that a national subject can come to its full

<sup>1</sup> *Om Kjempevisen og dens Betydning for Kunstpoesien*. Illustr. Nyhedsblad, 1857, Nos. 19, 20. Some portions of it are quoted by Jæger (Eng. tr. p. 91).

rights.' A ballad was the most favourable kind of material for the dramatist, and the liberties allowed by its facile rhythm were of immense value in dramatic dialogue. From the very outset, indeed, Ibsen had shown a singular liking for lyrical form. The tumultuous blank verse of *Catiline* no sooner reaches a certain pitch of passion than it breaks into a shower of rhymes; and that lovely creation, *Gildet på Solhaug*, is a more audacious blending of lyrical verse and prose. In the historical dramas which followed he wholly abandoned verse for the pithy unadorned prose of the Sagas; but only to return to rhyme with new zest in the brilliant *Comedy of Love*. Ibsen's whole earlier artistic career was a struggle between the lyrical instinct and the desire for absolutely natural speech. In his later prose drama, the former may seem to have surrendered at discretion;<sup>1</sup> in *Brand* and *Peer Gynt* he succeeded to an extraordinary degree in adapting a lyrical form to multifarious and in great part prosaic material, without either

<sup>1</sup> That the surrender was nevertheless qualified and conditional may be judged from the statement quoted in the opening lines of this Introduction.

sacrificing veracity of speech or producing that unpleasant 'disappointment' which commonly results from the unskilful introduction of unpoetical thoughts into verse, and which Coleridge has aptly compared to that of 'leaping in the dark from the last step of a staircase, when we had prepared our muscles for a leap of three or four.'

This naturalness is not obtained, however, at the cost of strength and beauty of verse. There is not a trace in Ibsen of the slovenliness into which the lordly licence of Shakespeare and the beautiful wantonness of Fletcher degenerated in the later Caroline dramatists, and which turned the noblest of all measures into an amorphous jumble of syllables. The metre he uses has, in regard to stress and rhythm even stricter laws than its English counterpart, and Ibsen observes them with scrupulous rigour. Thus, for instance, the precedent of Browne and Milton has made it usual with us to mingle at will 'trochaic' and 'iambic' verses, as in

Mountains on whose barren breast  
The labouring clouds do often rest ;—

a procedure demanding great delicacy of ear

in both poet and reader. In *Brand* the two varieties of the metre are rigorously kept apart, and used with felicitous effect to heighten the distinction between two classes of scene. The iambic is the measure of the more familiar and pedestrian scenes, where the tone is colloquial, argumentative, satirical, or, again, bustling and lively. The swifter and more sensitive trochaic, on the other hand, is used in scenes of passion and poetry, of poignant emotion, of mystic vision, of solitary thought. Thus all the great revealing crises of the action, the points at which the informing fire breaks through—the monologues of Brand, the visions of Agnes (Acts II. v.), and the scenes in which they successively ‘stand at the crossway’ to choose (end of Acts II. III. IV.),—are conveyed in the more lyrical metre, while the more conversational clothes the intervening tracts of common life.<sup>1</sup> As, however, either metre is always unbroken in the same scene, it sometimes happens that incidental argument or satire may

<sup>1</sup> In Spain, conversely, the trochaic was the normal metre, the iambic a comparatively rare variation in situations of exceptional dignity.

appear in trochaics: thus the whole scene of the consecration-festival takes its measure from Brand's great harangue, its turning-point. This refined and unobtrusive variation was all that Ibsen now retained of the characteristic romantic principle of correspondence between metre and subject, which makes the drama of Tieck a phantasmagoria of interchanging measures.

## XII

In striking contrast with this comparative uniformity of metrical structure is the immense variety of the language. Ibsen makes no concessions to the supposed demands of a 'poetical' form; he tells us in the same resonant verse of the religion of the future, and the cooking of a calf, of the eternity of the soul and of the price of meat. And we resent it as little as we resent Hotspur's wish to 'live with cheese and garlic in a windmill,' uttered in irreproachable blank verse though it be. The secret in all such cases lies in the entire unconstraint of the language. It is not so much regular rhythm, or even rhyme, which is felt to be incongruous with prosaic matter, for

both are common enough in everyday speech, but the inversions which everyday speech absolutely eschews, and only dithyrambic emotion can naturally assume. Coleridge's 'gentleman under the influence of the tragic muse,' who turned an everyday greeting into

'To you a morning good, good Sir ! I wish.

You, Sir, I thank : to you the same wish I'—

might have kept his blank verse without blame, if he could have kept his mother English undistorted.

Not that the language of *Brand* is, in the vulgar sense of the word, 'realistic.' It is not the talk of the man in the street, nor even of the man in the drawing-room, lecture-hall, or pulpit, cut into lengths and tagged with rhyme. Its veracity lies in the tone, in the thoughts and feelings expressed, rather than in the precise character of the expression, which is habitually forcible, pointed, picturesque, beyond the wont of even the best conversation. Yet even this point and picturesqueness are proportioned and modulated to the character, mood, and education of the speakers : it seems to be, not the poet's speech intruded upon theirs, but their own, heightened and vivified. There is

no universal prerogative of wit, as in Congreve and Sheridan, nor of ornate rhetoric, as in Schiller and Calderon, nor of robust and sinewy prose, as in Jonson, though all these qualities abound. The rich intellectual poetry which is the common speech of Brand himself becomes simple, intense, in his moments of supreme tragedy, appears as lively wit in the educated but unspiritual Mayor and Dean, as flashes of natural myth-making in the uneducated but vaguely spiritual Peasants. It is instructive to compare with these peasants of Ibsen's the sailors of Wergeland's *English Pilot*, who speak a grotesque dialect of dithyrambic phrases, spangled with nautical terms and scraps of bad English. In Ibsen, on the other hand, we rarely recede out of hearing of that common speech, of which Wergeland himself finely said that it was like the ring of the axe in the woods, at once resonant and homely. When Gerd hurling stones from the crag becomes a witch flinging corn, or Brand's drenched hair in the storm a backward streaming raven's wing, we are surely not 'receding' from it, but listening to the voice of its most imaginative moments.



There are, it is true, signs here and there that the bold variations of manner of which *Brand* is full are not wholly due to dramatic modulation; that behind them lies a conflict of different theories of dramatic style, which in *Brand* found only a temporary and partial solution. The demands of poetry and the demands of nature were not finally reconciled by weaving patches of lyric rapture and of colloquial prose together in the same rhythmic web, with whatever dramatic skill the patches might be distributed and arranged. The 'heightening' of natural language is not everywhere carried out on quite the same principles. At times the instinct for natural language gets its way for a moment, at times it collapses before an irrepressible outburst of the instinct for poetry. Brand's mother, for instance, a soulless peasant-woman who has spent her life in drudgery, may be permitted in her bitter anguish to describe her treasure as the 'child of her travail,' for which she has torn her breast, and over which she will weep as mothers over the cradle of their sick babes;—even perhaps to speak of the 'love' she had once known as dancing before her 'like fitting

light'; but when she describes Brand's piercing reproaches as 'poisonous thought-blooms shooting up in this sultry sunshine,' the Wergeland touch is perceptibly discordant.

Yet these signs are few, and the reader of the original is likely to be far less struck by them than by the skill with which utterly unlike styles are pressed into the service of dramatic portraiture. The Wergelandisms which Vinje in his review pointed out occur mostly in passages glowing with a fire in which these bold combinations seem naturally forged.<sup>1</sup> The drastic manner in which Vinje also saw the influence of Wergeland is used with singular effect in Brand's description of his unrecognised mother,<sup>2</sup> and his bright and tender landscape-painting in Einar's description of the mountain view over the fjord.<sup>3</sup> And the most beautiful things in the poem are not beauties of thought or phrase only, they are, if one may so say, steeped in the atmosphere of the situation, and derive half their power from it, while, in their turn, lighting it up with sudden

<sup>1</sup> He instances '*viljetvætt*,' '*loftningsjublen lyser*,' 'lov og pris går troldoms båret som en isstrøm gennem håret.' —Dölen, *u.s.*

<sup>2</sup> Tr. p. 63.

<sup>3</sup> Tr. p. 29.

poetry. Thus the awe-struck words of Agnes after the great colloquy with Brand, 'did you see—how he towered as he talked,' reveal at a glance the crisis of her fate at which she stands. Her defence of 'hasty marriage' ('A sunbeam's kiss, a bell's note, may awaken for a summer day')<sup>1</sup> would be less exquisite on other lips than those of the young wife 'awakened.' The haunting music of the 'Invisible Choir,' with its solemnly iterated double rhymes ('*Aldrig aldrig blir du lig ham*'),<sup>2</sup> and even the airy grace of the song of Einar and Agnes<sup>3</sup> cannot be detached from their context without loss.

Of poetic beauty there is indeed profusion in *Brand*. Yet beauty is hardly the dominant impression it makes. Its beauty is rather of the kind that springs up spontaneously, like flowers in the rifts of the rock, than that which is elicited by ardent culture of the beautiful. The instinct for beauty has to struggle in Ibsen with a more potent and imperious instinct for truth; just as the demand for Love has to struggle in him with the more energetic demand for force. And

<sup>1</sup> Tr. p. 89.<sup>2</sup> Tr. p. 260.<sup>3</sup> Tr. p. 12.

his is one of those intellects which seize the contrast rather than the kinship in unlike things, and tend, if one may so say, to polarise all relations into antitheses, all problems into irreducible dilemmas. 'Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty,' is for him a paradox which it is reserved for a visionary 'Third Kingdom' to realise. Yet this characteristic incapacity to *get away* from either of the two haunting alternatives, his refusal to take final refuge in either ideal beauty or unbeautiful truth, gives much of its peculiar power and attraction to *Brand*. Shelley had the same passion for Force, the same revolutionary detestation of whatever in the existing order of society shackles and constrains the unfolding of individual soul. He too had his dream of a Titan defying and laying low the 'God' of the multitude, the effete Jupiter of a corrupt world. But he avoided both the ethical and the æsthetic problems which such defiance in actual life brings with it, by transporting his Titan into an ideal world of elemental simplicity and sublimity, where, chained above the echoing cataracts of Caucasus, he awaits the dawn of freedom and love; and all the clashing

discords of human striving are resolved into a long-drawn melodious hymn of endurance and triumph. Ibsen has plunged into those problems ; and *Brand* stands as much above *Prometheus Unbound* in intellectual and ethical suggestiveness as it falls short of it in ethereal beauty and witching music. True, the natural world is no longer peopled with visionary shapes, and the embodied beauty of a love-kindled universe no longer looks towards her bridal with emancipated Man. But the poetry of revolutionary idealism has gained in subtlety what it has lost in imaginative effulgence, in passing from Shelley's crude antithesis of the liberator and the slave to Ibsen's picture of the spiritual bonds which the very struggle to liberate may impose. And it has gained in moral range what it has lost in simplicity, by passing from the ideal of freedom to that of self-realisation through self-surrender ; a conception which, however our interpretation of 'self' may change, can disappear from ethics only when ethics itself is exploded,—leading, as it does, in one direction, towards the Greek goodness of spiritual activity, in another towards the Christian goodness of sacrifice,

and in yet a third towards the satisfaction of that deep-rooted instinct of the natural man which is not the less vital because it is Polonius who utters it :

‘To thy own self be true ;  
And it must follow, as the night the day,  
Thou canst not then be false to any man.’

## PERSONS REPRESENTED

BRAND.

HIS MOTHER.

EINAR, a painter.

AGNES.

THE MAYOR.

THE DOCTOR.

THE DEAN.

THE SEXTON.

THE SCHOOLMASTER.

GERD.

A PEASANT.

HIS YOUNG SON.

ANOTHER PEASANT.

A WOMAN.

ANOTHER WOMAN.

A CLERK.

PRIESTS AND OFFICIALS.

CROWD : MEN, WOMEN, AND CHILDREN.

THE TEMPTER IN THE DESERT.

THE INVISIBLE CHOIR.

A VOICE.

The action takes place in our own time, at various points around a fjord-hamlet on the west coast of Norway.

# BRAND

## THE FIRST ACT

*High up in the mountain snowfields. The mist lies thick and close ; it is raining, and nearly dark.*

BRAND *in black, with stick and wallet, is struggling on westward. A PEASANT AND HIS YOUNG SON, who have joined him, are a little way behind.]*

THE PEASANT

*[calling after BRAND].*

Hullo, you stranger fellow, stay !  
Where are you ?

BRAND.

Here !

THE PEASANT.

                                    You've got astray !  
The fog's so thick, my sight it passes  
To see a staff's-length 'fore or back——

THE SON.

Father, here's clefts !

THE PEASANT.

And here crevasses !

A



## BRAND

BRAND.

And not a vestige of the track.

THE PEASANT

*[crying out].*

Hold, man ! God's death—! The very ground  
Is but a shell ! Don't stamp the snow !

BRAND

*[listening].*

I hear the roaring of a fall.

THE PEASANT.

A beck has gnawed its way below ;  
Here's an abyss that none can sound ;  
'Twill open and engulf us all !

BRAND.

As I have said, I MUST go on.

THE PEASANT.

That's past the power of any one.  
I tell you—the ground's a rotten crust—  
Hold, hold, man ! Death is where it's trod !

BRAND.

A great one gave me charge ; I MUST.

THE PEASANT.

What is his name ?

BRAND.

His name is God.

THE PEASANT.

And what might you be, pray ?

BRAND.

A priest.

THE PEASANT.

Maybe ; but one thing's clear at least :  
Though you were dean and bishop too,  
Death will have laid his grip on you  
Ere daybreak, if you dare to breast  
The glacier's cavern-cloven crest.

*[Approaching warily and insinuatingly.]*

Hark, priest ; the wisest, learned'st man  
Cannot do more than what he can.  
Turn back ; don't be so stiff and stout !  
A man has but a single life ;—  
What has he left if THAT goes out ?  
The nearest farm is two leagues off,  
And for the fog, it's thick enough  
To hack at with a hunting-knife.

BRAND.

If the fog's thick, no glimmering ray  
Of marsh-light lures our feet astray.

THE PEASANT.

All round lie ice-tarns in a ring,  
And an ice-tarn's an ugly thing.

BRAND

We'll walk across.

**BRAND****THE PEASANT.**

On waves you'll walk ?  
Your deeds will hardly match your talk.

**BRAND.**

Yet one has proved,—whose faith is sound  
May walk dry-footed on the sea.

**THE PEASANT.**

Yes, men of olden time, maybe ;  
But nowadays he'd just be drowned.

**BRAND**

[*going*].

Farewell !

**THE PEASANT.**

You throw your life away !

**BRAND.**

If God should haply need its loss,—  
Then welcome chasm, and flood, and foss.

**THE PEASANT**

[*to himself*].

Nay, but his wits are gone astray !

**THE SON**

[*half-crying*].

Come away, Father ! see how black  
With coming tempest is the wrack !

BRAND

*[stopping and approaching again].*

Hear, peasant ; you at first profess'd,  
Your daughter by the fjordside lying,  
Had sent you word that she was dying,  
But could not with a gladsome breast,  
Until she saw you, go to rest ?

THE PEASANT.

That's certain, as I hope for bliss !

BRAND.

And as her last day mentioned—THIS ?

THE PEASANT.

Yes.

BRAND.

Not a later ?

THE PEASANT.

No.

BRAND.

Then come !

THE PEASANT.

The thing's impossible—turn home !

BRAND

*[looking fixedly at him].*

Listen ! Would you give twenty pound  
If she might have a blest release ?

THE PEASANT.

Yes, parson !

## BRAND

BRAND.

Forty ?

THE PEASANT.

House and ground

I'd very gladly sign away

If so she might expire in peace !

BRAND.

But would you also give your LIFE ?

THE PEASANT.

What ? life ? My good friend—— !

BRAND.

Well ?

THE PEASANT

*[scratching his head].*

Nay, nay,

I draw the line somewhere or other—— !

In Jesus' name, remember, pray,

At home I've children and a wife.

BRAND.

He whom you mention had a mother.

THE PEASANT.

Ay, that was in the times of yore ;—

Then marvels were of every day ;

Such things don't happen any more.

BRAND.

Go home. You travel in death's track.

You know not God, God knows not you.

THE PEASANT.

Hoo, you are stern !

THE SON

[*pulling him away*].

Come back ! come back !

THE PEASANT.

Ay, ay ; but he must follow too !

BRAND.

Must I ?

THE PEASANT.

Ay, if I let you bide  
Up here in this accursed weather,  
And rumour told, what we can't hide,  
That you and we set out together,  
I'm haul'd some morning to the dock,—  
And if you're drown'd in flood and fen,  
I'm sentenced to the bolt and lock——

BRAND.

You suffer in God's service, then.

THE PEASANT.

Nor his nor yours is my affair ;  
My own is hard enough to bear.  
Come then !

BRAND.

Farewell !

[*A hollow roar is heard in the distance.*]

THE SON

[*shrieking*].

An avalanche roar !

BRAND

BRAND

[to the PEASANT, who has seized his collar].  
Off !

THE PEASANT.

Nay !

BRAND.

This instant !

THE SON.

Stay no more !

THE PEASANT

[*struggling with BRAND*].

Nay, devil take me—— !

BRAND

[*shakes him off and throws him down in  
the snow*].

That, depend

On it, he will do in the end !

[*Goes.*]

THE PEASANT

[*sitting and rubbing his arm*].

Ow, ow ; his arm's an iron rod ;  
And that's what he calls serving God !

[*Calling as he gets up.*]

Ho, priest !

THE SON.

He's gone athwart the hill.

. THE PEASANT.

Ay, but I see him glimmer still.

[*Calling again.*]

Hear me,—if you remember, say,  
Where was it that we lost the way?

BRAND

[*in the mist.*]

You need no cross to point you right ;—  
The broad and beaten track you tread.

THE PEASANT.

God grant it were but as he said,  
And I'd sit snug at home to-night.  
[*He and his Son retire eastwards.*]

BRAND

[*reappears higher up, and listens in the  
direction in which the PEASANT went.*]

Homeward they grovel ! Thou dull thrall,  
If but thy feeble flesh were all,  
If any spark of living will  
Sprang in thee, I had help'd thee still.  
With breaking back, and feet way-worn,  
Lightly and swift I had thee borne ;—  
But help is idle for the man  
Who nothing wills but what he can.

[*Goes further on.*]

Ah life ! ah life ! Why art thou then  
So passing sweet to mortal men ?  
In every weakling's estimation



His own life does as grossly weigh  
As if the load of man's salvation  
Upon his puny shoulders lay.  
For every burden he's prepared,  
God help us,—so his life be spared !

*[Smiles as in recollection.]*

Two thoughts in boyhood broke upon me,  
And spasms of laughter in me woke,  
And from our ancient school-dame won me  
Many a just and bitter stroke.  
An Owl I fancied, scared by night ;  
A Fish that had the water-fright ;  
I sought to banish them ;—in vain,  
They clung like leeches to my brain.  
Whence rose that laughter in my mind ?  
Ah, from the gulf, dimly divined,  
Between the living world we see  
And the world as it ought to be,  
Between enduring what we must,  
And murmuring, it is unjust !

Ah, whole or sickly, great or small,  
Such owls, such fishes, are we all.  
Born to be tenants of the deep,  
Born to be exiles from the sun,  
This, even this, does us appal ;  
We dash against the beetling steep,  
Our starry-vaulted home we shun,  
And crying to heaven, bootless pray  
For air and the glad flames of day !

*[Pauses a moment, starts, and listens.]*

What do I hear ? A sound of singing.  
Ay, blended song and laughter ringing.

With now a cheer and now a hollo,—  
Another—and another—follow !

Lo, the sun rises ; the mist lifts.  
Already through the breaking rifts  
The illimitable heights I see ;  
And now that joyous company  
Stands out against the morning light  
Upon the summit of the height.  
Their shadows taper to the west,  
Farewells are utter'd, hands are press'd.  
And now they part. The others move  
Eastward away, two westward wend,  
And, waving hats and kerchiefs, send  
Their farewell messages of love.

*[The sun gradually breaks through and disperses the mist. BRAND stands and looks down on the two as they approach.]*

How the light glitters round these two !  
It is as if the mist took flight,  
And flowering heather clothed the height,  
And heaven laugh'd round them where they go.  
Brother and sister, hand in hand,  
They spring along the hill together,  
She scarcely stirs the dewy heather,  
And he is lissome as a wand.  
Now she darts back, he rushes after,  
Now slips aside, eludes his aim,—  
Out of their gambols grows a game—— !  
And hark, a song out of their laughter !

*[EINAR and AGNES, in light summer dress, both of them warm and glowing, come playing across the level. The mist is gone ; a bright summer morning lies on the mountains.]*

EINAR.

Agnes, my beautiful butterfly,  
Playfully shalt thou be caught !  
I am weaving a net, and its meshes fine  
Are all of my music wrought !

AGNES

*[dancing backwards and always eluding  
him].*

And am I a butterfly, dainty and slight,  
Let me sip of the heather-bell blue,  
And art thou a boy, let me be thy sport,  
But oh ! not thy captive too !

EINAR.

Agnes, my beautiful butterfly,  
I have woven my meshes so thin,  
And never availeth thy fluttering flight,  
Soon art thou my captive within.

AGNES.

And am I a butterfly young and bright,  
Full joyously I can play,  
But if in thy net I a captive lie  
Oh, touch not my wings, I pray !

EINAR.

Nay, I will lift thee with tender hand,  
And lock thee up in my breast,  
And there thou shalt play thy whole life long  
At the game thy heart loves best.

*[They have unwittingly approached a sheer  
precipice, and are now close to the edge.]*

BRAND

*[calls down to them].*

Hold ! hold ! You stand by an abyss !

EINAR.

Who calls us ?

AGNES

*[pointing up].*

See !

BRAND.

Heed where you go !

Your feet are on the hollow snow  
That overhangs a precipice.

EINAR

*[clasping her, and laughing up to*

BRAND.]

Needless for her and me your fears !

AGNES.

We have a whole life long to play !

EINAR.

In sunshine lies our destined way,  
And ends but with a hundred years.

BRAND.

And then you perish ? So !

AGNES

*[waving her veil].*

No ; then

We fly to heaven and play again !

## BRAND

EINAR.

A hundred years to revel given,  
Each night the bridal lamps aflame,—  
A century of glorious game——

BRAND.

And then—?

EINAR.

Then home again to heaven,—

BRAND.

Aha ! so THAT is whence you came ?

EINAR.

Of course ; how should we not come thence ?

AGNES.

That is, our very latest flight  
Is from the valley, eastward hence.

BRAND.

I think I saw you on the height.

EINAR.

Ay, it was there on those loved faces  
Even but now we look'd our last,  
And with clasp'd hands, kisses, embraces  
Seal'd all our tender memories fast !  
Come down to us, and I will tell  
How God's been good beyond compare—  
And you shall all our gladness share—— !  
Pooh, stand not like an icicle !  
Come, thaw now ! There, I like you so.  
First, I'm a painter, you must know,

And even this to me was sweet,—  
To lend my fancy wings and feet,  
In colours to bid life arise,  
As He of grubs breeds butterflies.  
But God surpass'd Himself when He  
My Agnes gave me for my bride !  
I came from travels over sea,  
My painter's satchel at my side——

AGNES

[eagerly].

Glad as a king, and fresh, and free,—  
And knew a thousand songs beside !

EINAR.

Just as the village I pass'd through,  
She chanced to dwell an inmate there.  
SHE long'd to taste the upland air,  
The scented woods, the sun, the dew ;  
ME God unto the mountains drew,—  
My heart cried out : Seek Beauty's might  
In forests dim and rivers bright  
And flying clouds beneath the blue.—  
Then I achieved my height of art :  
A rosy flush upon her cheek,  
Two joyous eyes that seem'd to speak,  
A smile whose music filled the heart——

AGNES.

For you, though, all that art was vain,  
You drank life's beaker, blind and rapt,  
And then, one sunny morn, again  
Stood, staff in hand and baggage strapp'd——

EINAR.

Then suddenly the thought occur'd :  
' Why, friend, the wooing is forgot !'  
Hurrah ! I ask'd, she gave her word,  
And all was settled on the spot.  
Our good old doctor, like a boy,  
Was 'all beside himself with joy ;  
So three whole days, and whole nights three,  
Held revclry for her and me ;  
Mayor and constable, clerk and priest,—  
All the grown youth was at the feast.  
Last night we left, but not for that  
The revel or the banquet ceased ;  
With banner'd pole and wreathed hat,  
Up over bank, on over brae,  
Our comrades brought us on our way.

AGNES.

The mountain-side we danced along,  
In couples now, and now in groups,—

EINAR.

Drank luscious wine from silver stoups,—

AGNES.

Awoke the summer night with song,—

EINAR.

And the thick mist before our feet  
Beat an obsequious retreat.

BRAND.

And now your way lies— ?

EINAR.

To the town

Before us.

AGNES.

To my parents' home.

EINAR.

First over yonder peak, then down  
To the fjord haven in the west ;  
On Egir's courser through the foam  
Ride homeward to the bridal feast,—  
So to the sunny south together  
Like paired swans in their first flight—— !

BRAND.

And there—— ?

EINAR.

A life of summer weather,  
A dream, a legend of delight.  
For on this Sabbath morn have we,  
High on the hills, without a priest,  
From fear and sorrow been released  
And consecrate to gaiety.

BRAND.

By whom ?

EINAR.

By all the merry crowd.  
With ringing glasses every cloud  
Was banish'd that might dash the leaves  
Too rudely at our cottage eaves.

B



Out of our speech they put to flight  
Each warning word of stormy showers,  
And hail'd us, garlanded with flowers,  
The true-born children of Delight.

BRAND  
[*going*].

Farewell, ye two.

EINAR  
[*starting and looking more closely at him*].

I pray you, hold !  
Something familiar in your face——

BRAND  
[*coldly*].

I am a stranger.

EINAR.  
Yet a trace  
Surely there lingers of an old  
Friend of my school-days——

BRAND.  
School-friends, true ;  
But now I am no more a boy.

EINAR.  
Can it be—— ?  
[*Cries out suddenly*]  
Brand ! It is ! O joy !

BRAND.  
From the first moment I knew you.

EINAR.

Well met ! a thousand times well met !  
 Look at me !—Ay, the old Brand yet,  
 Still centred on the things within,  
 Whom never any one could win  
 To join our gambols.

BRAND.

You forget  
 That I was homeless and alone.  
 Yet you at least I loved, I own.  
 You children of the southern land  
 Were fashion'd of another clay  
 Than I, born by a rocky strand  
 In shadow of a barren brae.

EINAR

Your home is here, I think ?

BRAND.

Lies past it.

My way

EINAR.

Past ? What, further ?

BRAND.

Beyond, beyond my home.

Far

EINAR.

A priest ?

You are

BRAND

[*smiling*].

A mission-preacher, say.  
 I wander like the woodland hare,  
 And where I am, my home is there.

## BRAND

EINAR.

And whither is your last resort ?

BRAND

*[sternly and quickly].*

Inquire not !

EINAR.

Wherefore ?

BRAND

*[changing his tone].*

Ah,—then know,

The ship that stays for you below  
Shall bear me also from the port.

EINAR.

Hurrah ! My bridal-courser true !  
Think, Agnes, he is coming too !

BRAND.

But *I* am to a burial bound.

AGNES.

A BURIAL ?

EINAR.

You ? Why, who is dead ?

BRAND.

The God who was YOUR God, you said.

AGNES

*[shrinking back].*

Come, Einar !

EINAR.

Brand !

BRAND.

With cerements wound

The God of each mechanic slave,  
Of each dull drudger, shall be laid  
By broad day in his open grave.  
End of the matter must be made ;  
And high time is it you should know  
He ail'd a thousand years ago.

EINAR.

Brand, you are ill !

BRAND.

No, sound and fresh

As juniper and mountain-pine !  
It is our age whose pining flesh  
Craves burial at these hands of mine.  
Ye will but laugh and love and play,  
A little doctrine take on trust,  
And all the bitter burden thrust  
On One who came, ye have been told,  
And from your shoulders took away  
Your great transgressions manifold.  
He bore for you the cross, the lance—  
Ye therefore have full leave to dance ;  
Dance then,—but where your dancing ends  
Is quite another thing, my friends !

EINAR.

Ah, I perceive, the latest cry,  
That folks are so much taken by.  
You come of the new brood, who hold  
That life is only gilded mould,  
And with God's penal fires and flashes  
Hound all the world to sack and ashes.

BRAND.

No, I am no 'Evangelist,'  
 I speak not as the Church's priest ;  
 That I'm a Christian, even, I doubt ;  
 That I'm a man, though, I know well,  
 And that I see the cancer fell  
 That eats our country's marrow out.

EINAR

[*smiling*].

I never heard, I must confess,  
 Our country tax'd with being given  
 To worldly pleasure in excess !

BRAND.

No, by delight no breast is riven ;—  
 Were it but so, the ill were less !  
 Be passion's slave, be pleasure's thrall,—  
 But be it utterly, all in all !  
 Be not to-day, to-morrow, one,  
 Another when a year is gone ;  
 Be what you are with all your heart,  
 And not by pieces and in part.  
 The Bacchant's clear, defined, complete,  
 The sot, his sordid counterfeit ;  
 Silenus charms ; but all his graces  
 The drunkard's parody debases.  
 Traverse the land from beach to beach,  
 Try every man in heart and soul,  
 You'll find he has no virtue whole,  
 But just a little grain of each.

A little pious in the pew,  
A little grave,—his fathers' way,—  
Over the cup a little gay,—  
It was his fathers' fashion too !  
A little warm when glasses clash,  
And stormy cheer and song go round  
For the small Folk, rock-will'd, rock-bound,  
That never stood the scourge and lash.  
A little free in promise-making ;  
And then, when vows in liquor will'd  
Must be in mortal stress fulfill'd,  
A little fine in promise-breaking.  
Yet, as I say, all fragments still,  
His faults, his merits, fragments all,  
Partial in good, partial in ill,  
Partial in great things and in small ;—  
But here's the grief—that, worst or best,  
Each fragment of him wrecks the rest !

EINAR.

Scoffing's an easy task : it were  
A nobler policy to spare——

BRAND.

Perhaps, if it were wholesome too.

EINAR.

Well, well, the indictment I endorse  
With all my heart ; but can't divine  
What in the world it has to do  
With Him, the God you count a corse,  
Whom yet I still acknowledge mine.

## BRAND

BRAND.

My genial friend, your gift is Art ;—  
Show me the God you have averr'd.  
Him you have painted, I have heard,  
And touch'd the honest people's heart.  
Old is he haply ; am I right ?

EINAR.

Well, yes——

BRAND.

Of course ; and, doubtless, white ?

Hairs straggling on a reverend head,  
A beard of ice or silver-thread ;  
Kindly, yet stern enough to fright  
A pack of children in the night.  
I will not ask you, if your God  
With fireside slippers you have shod ;  
But 'twere a pity, without doubt,  
To leave skull-cap and glasses out.

EINAR

[*angrily*].

What do you mean ?

BRAND.

I do not flout ;

Just so he looks in form and face,  
The household idol of our race.  
As Catholics make of the Redeemer  
A baby at the breast, so ye  
Make God a dotard and a dreamer,  
Verging on second infancy.  
And as the Pope on Peter's throne  
Calls little but his keys his own,

So to the Church ye would confine  
The world-wide realm of the Divine ;  
'Twixt Life and Doctrine set a sea,  
Nowise concern yourselves to BE ;  
Bliss for your souls ye would receive,  
Not utterly and wholly LIVE.  
Ye need, such feebleness to brook,  
A God who'll through his fingers look,  
Who, like yourselves, is hoary grown,  
And keeps a cap for his bald crown.  
Mine is another kind of God !  
Mine is a storm, where thine's a lull,  
Implacable where thine's a clod,  
All-loving there, where thine is dull ;  
And He is young like Hercules,  
No hoary sipper of life's lees !  
His voice rang through the dazzled night  
When He, within the burning wood,  
By Moses upon Horeb's height  
As by a pigmy's pigmy stood.  
In Gibeon's vale He stay'd the sun,  
And wonders without end has done,  
And wonders without end would do,  
Were not the age grown sick,—like you !

EINAR

*[smiling faintly].*

And now the age shall be made whole ?

BRAND.

It shall, I say, and that as sure  
As that I came to earth to cure  
The sapping fester of its soul.



## EINAR

[*shaking his head*].

Ere yet the radiant torchlight blazes,  
Throw not the taper to the ground !  
Nor blot the antiquated phrases  
Before the great new words be found !

## BRAND.

Nothing that's new do I demand ;  
For Everlasting Right I stand.  
It is not for a Church I cry,  
It is not dogmas I defend ;  
Day dawn'd on both, and, possibly,  
Day may on both of them descend.  
What's made has 'finis' for its brand ;  
Of moth and worm it feels the flaw,  
And then, by nature and by law,  
Is for an embryo thrust aside.  
But there is One that shall abide ;—  
The Spirit, that was never born,  
That in the world's fresh gladsome Morn  
Was rescued when it seem'd forlorn,  
That built with valiant faith a road  
Whereby from Flesh it climb'd to God.  
Now but in shreds and scraps is dealt  
The Spirit we have faintly felt ;  
But from these scraps and from these shreds,  
These headless hands and handless heads,  
These torso-stumps of soul and thought,  
A Man complete and whole shall grow,  
And God His glorious child shall know,  
His heir, the Adam that He wrought !

EINAR

*[breaking off].*

Farewell. I judge that it were best  
We parted.

BRAND.

You are going west,  
I northward. To the fjord from here  
Two pathways lead,—both alike near.  
Farewell !

EINAR.

Farewell.

BRAND

*[turning round again].*

Light learn to part  
From vapour.—Know that Life's an art !

EINAR

*[waving him off].*

Go, turn the universe upside down ;  
Still in my ancient God I trust !

BRAND.

Good ; paint his crutches and his crown,—  
I go to lay him in the dust !

*[Disappears over the pass.]**[EINAR goes silently to the edge and looks after him.]*

AGNES

*[stands a moment lost in thought ; then starts, looks  
about her uneasily, and asks]*

Is the sun set already ?

## BRAND

EINAR.

Nay,  
A shadowing cloud ; and now 'tis past.

AGNES.

The wind is cold !

EINAR.

Only a blast  
That hurried by. Here lies our way.

AGNES.

Yon mountain southward, sure, till now,  
Wore not that black and beetling brow.

EINAR.

Thou saw'st it not for game and glee  
Ere with his cry he startled thee.  
Let him pursue his toilsome track,  
And we will to our gambols back !

AGNES.

No, now I'm weary.

EINAR.

And indeed  
I'm weary too, to tell the truth,—  
And here our footing asks more heed  
Than on yon upland broad and smooth.  
But once we're on the level plain  
We'll dance defiantly once more,  
Ay, in a tenfold wilder vein  
And tenfold swifter than before.

See, Agnes, yon blue line that sparkles,  
Fresh from the young sun's morning kiss,  
And now it dimples and now darkles,  
Silver one moment, amber this ;  
It is the ocean glad and free  
That in the distance thou dost see.  
And seest thou the smoky track  
In endless line to leeward spread ?  
And seest thou the point of black  
Just rounding now the furthest head ?  
It is the steamer—thine and mine—  
And now it speeds into the fjord,  
Then out into the foaming brine  
To-night with thee and me on board !—  
The mists have veil'd the mountain brow—  
Saw'st thou how vividly, but now,  
Heaven's image in the water woke !

AGNES

*[looking absently about her].*

Oh, yes. But tell me—sawest thou—— ?

EINAR.

What ?

AGNES

*[in a hushed voice, without looking at him].*

How he tower'd as he spoke ?

*[She goes down over the pass, EINAR follows.]*

---

[*A path along the crags, with a wild valley beyond to the right. Above, and beyond the mountain, are glimpses of greater heights, with peaks and snow.*]

## BRAND

[*comes up along the path, descends, stops half-way upon a jutting crag, and gazes into the valley*].

Yes, I know myself once more !  
Every boat-house by the shore,  
Every home ; the landslip-fall,  
And the inlet's fringe of birch,  
And the ancient, moulder'd church,  
And the river alders, all  
From my boyhood I recall.  
But methinks it all has grown  
Grayer, smaller than I knew ;  
Yon snow-cornice hangs more prone  
Than of old it used to do,  
From that scanty heaven encloses  
Yet another strip of blue,  
Beetles, looms, immures, imposes—  
Steals of light a larger due.

[*Sits down and gazes into the distance.*]

And the fjord too. Crouch'd it then  
In so drear and deep a den ?  
'Tis a squall. A square-rigg'd skiff  
Scuds before it to the land.  
Southward, shadow'd by the cliff,  
I descry a wharf, a shed,  
Then, a farm-house, painted red.—  
'Tis the farm beside the strand !

'Tis the widow's farm. The home  
Of my childhood. Thronging come  
Memories born of memories dead.  
I, where yonder breakers roll,  
Grew, a lonely infant-soul.

Like a nightmare on my heart  
Weighs the burden of my birth,  
Knit to one, who walks apart  
With her spirit set to earth.  
All the high emprise that stirr'd  
In me, now is veil'd and blurr'd.  
Force and valour from me fail,  
Heart and soul grow faint and frail ;  
As I near my home, I change,  
To my very self grow strange—  
Wake, as baffled Samson woke,  
Shorn and fetter'd, tamed and broke.

*[Looks again down into the valley.]*

What is stirring down below ?  
Out of every garth they flow,  
Troops of children, wives and men,  
And in long lines meet and mingle,  
Now among the rocks and shingle  
Vanish, now emerge again ;—  
To the ancient Church they go.

*[Rises.]*

Oh, I know you, through and through !  
Sluggard spirits, souls of lead !  
All the Lord's Prayer, said by you,  
Is not with such anguish sped,  
By such passion borne on high,

That one tittle thrills the sky  
 As a ringing human cry,  
 Save the prayer for daily bread !  
 That's this people's battle-call,  
 That's the blazon of them all !  
 From its context pluck'd apart,  
 Branded deep in every heart—  
 There it lies, the tempest-tost  
 Wreckage of the Faith you've lost.  
 Forth ! out of this stifling pit !  
 Vault-like is the air of it !  
 Not a Flag may float unfurl'd  
 In this dead and windless world !

*[He is going ; a stone is thrown from above  
 and rolls down the slope close by him.]*

BRAND

*[calling upward].*

Ha ! who throws stones there ?

GERD

*[a girl of fifteen, running along the crest  
 with stones in her apron].*

Ho ! Good aim !

He screams !

*[She throws again.]*

BRAND.

Hullo, child, stop that game !

GERD.

Without a hurt he's sitting now,  
 And swinging on a wind-swept bough !

[*She throws again and screams.*]

Now fierce as ever he's making for me.  
Help! Hoo! With claws he'll rend and gore me!

BRAND.

In the Lord's name——!

GERD.

Whist! who are you?  
Hold still, hold still; he's flying.

BRAND.

Who?

GERD.

Didn't you see the falcon fly?

BRAND.

Here? no.

GERD.

The laidly fowl with crest  
Thwart on its sloping brow depress'd,  
And red-and-yellow-circled eye!

BRAND.

Which is your way?

GERD.

To church I go.

BRAND.

Then we can go along together.

GERD

[*pointing upward*].

We? But the way I'm bound is thither.

C



## BRAND

BRAND

*[pointing downward].*

But yonder is the church, you know !

GERD

*[pointing downward with a scornful smile].*

That yonder ?

BRAND.

Truly ; come with me.

GERD.

No ; yon is ugly.

BRAND.

Ugly ? Why ?

GERD.

Because it's small.

BRAND.

Where did you see

A greater ?

GERD.

I could tell you, I.

Farewell.

*[She turns away upwards.]*

BRAND.

Lies THERE that church of yours ?

Why, that way leads but to the moors.

GERD.

Come with me, you ; I've got to show  
A church that's built of ice and snow !

BRAND.

Of ice and snow ! I see the truth !

There, amid peak and precipice  
As I remember from my youth,  
There yawns a cavernous abyss ;  
'Ice-church' they call'd the place of old ;  
And of it many a tale was told ;  
A frozen tarn has paved the floor ;  
Aloft, in massy-piled blocks,  
The gather'd snow-drifts slope and soar  
Arch-like over the yawning rocks.

GERD.

It seems a mountain cleft,—ah, yes,  
It is a church, though, none the less.

BRAND.

Never go there ; a sudden gust  
Has often crack'd that hollow crust ;  
A rifle-shot, a scream, a whoop——

GERD

*[without listening to him].*

Just come and see a reindeer troop  
Gulf'd in the fall, and never found  
Till spring and the great thaw came round.

BRAND.

Yonder is danger ; go not near it !

GERD

*[pointing down].*

Yonder is foulness ; thou must fear it !

BRAND.

God's peace with you !

GERD.

Nay, this way pass !

Yonder the cataract's singing Mass ;  
There on the crags the whistling weather  
Preaches you hot and cold together.  
Thither the hawk will ne'er steal in ;  
Down, down he sweeps from Svartetind,—  
Yonder he sits, the ugly block,  
Like my church-steeple's weathercock.

BRAND.

Wild is thy way, and wild thy soul,—  
A cittern with a shatter'd bowl.  
Of dulness dulness is the brood,—  
But evil's lightly won to good.

GERD.

With whirring wings I hear him come !  
I'll e'en make shift to get me home !  
In yonder church I'm safe,—farewell ;—  
He's on me,—hoo, how fierce and fell !

*[She screams.]*

I'll throw a stone ! No nearer, now !  
If thou hast talons, I've a bough !

*[She runs off up the mountain.]*

BRAND

*[after a pause].*

This was a church-goer, like the rest.  
Mountain- or Dale-church, which is best ?  
Which wildest reel, which blindest grope,  
Which furthest roam from home and hope :—

LIGHT-HEART who, crown'd with leafage gay,  
Loves by the dizziest verge to play,—  
FAINT-HEART, who marches slack and slow,  
Because old Wont will have it so ;—  
WILD-HEART, who, borne on lawless wings,  
Sees fairness in the foulest things ?  
War front and rear, war high and low,  
With this fell triple-banded foe !  
I see my Call ! It gleams ahead  
Like sunshine through a loop-hole shed !  
I know my task ; these demons slain,  
The sick Earth shall grow sound again ;—  
Once let them to the grave be given,  
The fever-fumes of Earth shall fly !  
Up, Soul, array thee ! Sword from thigh !  
To battle for the heirs of Heaven !

*[He descends to the hamlet.]*

## THE SECOND ACT

*[By the fjord-side, steep precipices all around. The ancient and tumble-down church stands on a little knoll hard by. A storm is coming on. The country-folk,—men, women, and children,—are gathered in knots, some on the shore, some on the slopes. The MAYOR sits in the midst, on a stone; a CLERK is helping him; corn and provisions are being distributed. EINAR and AGNES stand surrounded by a crowd, a little apart. Some boats lie on the beach. BRAND comes forward, unnoticed, to the church-knoll.]*

A MAN

*[breaking through the crowd].*

Out of the way !

A WOMAN.

I'm first !

THE MAN

*[thrusting her aside].*

Get back !

*[pushing towards the MAYOR.]*

Ho ! look you, fill me up my sack !

THE MAYOR.

All in good time.

THE MAN.

I cannot stay ;—  
I've four—five—babes of bread bereft !

THE MAYOR

[*facetiously*].

You don't know just how many, eh ?

THE MAN.

One was e'en dying when I left.

THE MAYOR.

Hold. You are enter'd, are you not ?

[*Examines his papers.*]

No. Yes, you are though. Well for you.

[*To the CLERK.*]

Give Number Twenty-nine his lot.

Come, come, good folks, be patient, do !

Nils Snemyr ?

A MAN.

Ay, ay !

THE MAYOR.

We must pare

A quarter off your former share.

You're fewer now, you know.

THE MAN.

Yes, yes,—

My Ragnhild died yestreen.

THE MAYOR

[*making a note*].

One less.

Saving is saving, howsoe'er.

[*To the MAN, who is retiring.*]

But look you, now, you needn't run  
And marry another on the spot !

CLERK

[*sniggering*].

Hee, hee !

THE MAYOR

[*sharply*].

You laugh ?

CLERK.

Your Worship's fun

Is irresistible.

THE MAYOR.

Have done !

This work's no jesting ; but the best  
Method with mourners is a jest.

EINAR

[*coming out of the throng with AGNES*].

Now my last pocket's clean and bare,  
Spent every stiver, every note ;—  
A very beggar I go afloat,  
And pawn my watch to pay my fare !

THE MAYOR.

Yes, in good time you came along.  
What I've collected is a song,—  
By no means answers to the call  
When needy hand and mouth ill-fed  
Must halve the sharing of shared bread  
With those who've ne'er a bit at all.

[*He perceives BRAND, and points up to him.*]

One more ! You're welcome ! If report  
Of our drought-flood-and-famine curse  
Has reach'd you, promptly loose your purse  
(If yet unloosen'd). Every sort  
Of contribution meets the case.  
Our store 's nigh spent. Five fishes scant  
In the wide wilderness of Want  
Don't make a square meal nowadays.

BRAND.

Myriads, idolatrously given,  
Would lift the soul no nearer heaven.

THE MAYOR.

It was not words I bade you share :  
They're barren when the belly's bare.

EINAR.

I can't believe that you recall  
What long and fierce calamities  
They've suffered :—famine, drought, disease.  
Men die, Brand——

BRAND.

I perceive it all.  
Each livid-circled eye makes clear  
Who it is holds assizes here.

THE MAYOR.

Yet there you stand, a very flint !

BRAND.

If life here ran its sluggish round  
Of common toil and common stint,  
Pity with me your pangs had found.



Who homeward crawls with earth-set eyes,  
In him the sleeping beast will rise.  
When days in drowsy calm go by,  
Like funerals, at walking pace,  
You well may fear that the Most High  
Has struck you from His book of Grace.  
But unto you He was more good,  
He scatter'd terror in your blood,  
He scourged you with the rods that slay,  
The gifts He gave, He took away——

VOICES

[*fiercely interrupting him*].  
He mocks us in our bitter need !

THE MAYOR.

He rails at us who tend and feed !

BRAND

[*shaking his head*].

Oh, if the blood of all my heart  
Could heal you from the hunger-smart,  
In welling streams it should be shed,  
Till every vein was a dry bed.  
But here it were a sin to give !  
God seeks to pluck you from your bane ;—  
Nations, though poor and sparse, that LIVE,  
Suck might and marrow from their pain.  
The purblind sight takes falcon-wings,  
Sees clear into the heart of things,  
The faltering will stands stout at bay,  
And sees the triumph through the fray.  
But men whom misery has not mann'd  
Are worthless of the saving hand !

A WOMAN.

Yonder a storm breaks on the fjord,  
As if awaken'd by his word !

ANOTHER WOMAN.

He tempts God ! Mark what I foretell !

BRAND.

YOUR God ne'er wrought a miracle !

WOMEN.

See, see ! the storm !

VOICES AMONG THE THROG.

Stab,—stone him ! chase

The flinty fellow from the place !

[*The peasants close menacingly round BRAND.*

*The MAYOR intervenes. A WOMAN, wild  
and dishevelled, comes hurriedly down the  
slopes.*]

THE WOMAN

[*crying out towards the throng*].

Oh, where is help, for Jesus' grace !

THE MAYOR.

What do you need ? Explain your case.

THE WOMAN.

Nothing I need ; no alms I seek,  
But oh, the horror, horror——

THE MAYOR.

Speak !

THE WOMAN.

I have no voice,—O comfort, aid !  
Where is the priest ?

## BRAND

THE MAYOR.

Here there is none—

THE WOMAN.

I am undone ! I am undone !  
Stern wast thou, God, when I was made !

BRAND

*[approaching].*

Maybe, however, there is ONE.

THE WOMAN

*[seizing his arm].*

Then let him come, and swiftly !

BRAND.

Tell

Your need, and he will surely come.

THE WOMAN.

Across the fjord—my husband——

BRAND.

Well ?

THE WOMAN.

Three starving babes, and ne'er a crumb,——  
Say no,—he is not sent to hell !

BRAND.

Your story first.

THE WOMAN.

My breast was dry ;  
Man sent no help, and God was dumb ;  
My babe was dying in agony ;  
Cut to the heart,—his child he slew !—

BRAND.

He slew—— !

THE THROG

[*shuddering*].

His child !

THE WOMAN.

At once he knew

The horror of his deed of blood !

His grief ran brimming like a flood ;

He struck himself the death-wound too.

Come, save him, save him from perdition,

Spite of wild water and wild sky !

He cannot live, and dare not die !

There lies he, clasping the dead frame,

And shrieking on the Devil's name !

BRAND

[*quietly*].

Yes, HERE is need.

EINAR

[*pale*].

Great God on high !

THE MAYOR.

He doesn't live in my Division.

BRAND

[*curtly, to the Peasants*].

Unmoor a boat and row me there !

A MAN.

When such a storm is up ? Who dare

## BRAND

THE MAYOR.

A path goes round the fjord——

THE WOMAN.

Nay, nay,

There's now no practicable way ;  
The footbridge as I came across  
Was broken by the foaming foss.

BRAND.

Unmoor the boat.

A MAN.

It can't be done ;  
O'er rock and reef the breakers run.

ANOTHER.

Down sweeps a blast ! See, at a stroke  
The whole fjord vanishes in smoke !

A THIRD.

With waves so wild and wind so rough,  
The Dean would put the service off.

BRAND.

A sinful soul that nears its end  
Waits not until the weather mend !  
[*Goes down to a boat and looses the sail.*]  
You'll risk the boat ?

THE OWNER.

I will ; but stay !

BRAND.

Now, who will risk his LIFE, I say ?

A MAN.

I'll not go with him.

ANOTHER.

No, nor I.

SEVERAL.

It were just putting out to die !

BRAND.

YOUR God helps none across the fjord ;  
Remember, though, that MINE's on board !

THE WOMAN

*[wringing her hands]*

He'll die unsaved !

BRAND

*[calling from the boat].*

ONE will avail

To bale the leakage, shift the sail ;  
Come, one of you that lately gave ;  
Give now to death and to the grave !

SEVERAL

*[shrinking back].*

Never ask such-like of us !

ONE

*[menacingly].*

Land !

'Tis overbold to tempt God's hand !

SEVERAL VOICES.

See, the storm thickens !

OTHERS.

The ropes break !

BRAND

[*holding himself fast with the boat-hook, and calling to the strange WOMAN*].

Good ; come then you ; but speedily !

THE WOMAN

[*shrinking back*].

I ! Where no others—— !

BRAND.

Let them be !

THE WOMAN.

I cannot !

BRAND.

Cannot ?

THE WOMAN.

My babes' sake—— !

BRAND

[*scornfully laughing*].

You build upon a quaking sand !

AGNES

[*turns with glowing cheeks to EINAR, lays her hand on his arm, and says*].

Did you hear ALL ?

EINAR.

A valiant heart.

AGNES.

Thank God, Einar, you see your part !

[*Calls to BRAND*].

See,—here is one man, brave and true,  
To go the saving way with you !

BRAND.

Come on then !

EINAR

[*pale*].

I !

AGNES.

I give you ! Go !

Mine eyes are lifted, that were low !

EINAR.

Ere I found you, with willing feet  
I would have follow'd where he led——

AGNES

[*trembling*].

But now—— !

EINAR.

My life is new and sweet ;—

I CANNOT go !

AGNES

[*starting back*].

What have you said !

EINAR.

I DARE not go !

AGNES

[*with a cry*].

Now roars a sea  
Of sweeping flood and surging foam  
World-wide, world-deep, 'twixt you and me !

[*To BRAND.*]

I will go with you !

D



## BRAND

BRAND.

Good ; then come !

EINAR

*[clutching desperately after her].*

Agnes !

THE WHOLE THRONG

*[hurrying towards her].*

Come back ! Come back !

WOMEN

*[in terror as she springs into the boat].*

Help, Lord !

BRAND.

Where does the house lie ?

WOMAN

*[pointing].*

By the fjord,

Behind yon black and jutting brink !

*[The boat puts out.]*

EINAR

*[calling after them].*

Your home, your mother, Agnes ! Think !

O save yourself !

AGNES.

We are THREE on board !

*[The boat sails. The people crowd together on the slopes, and watch in eager suspense.]*

A MAN.

He clears the headland !

ANOTHER.

Nay !

THE FIRST.

Yes, see,—

Astern he has it, and in lee !

ANOTHER.

A squall ! It's caught them !

THE MAYOR.

Look at that,—

The wind has swept away his hat !

A WOMAN.

Black as a rook's wing, his wet hair  
Streams backward on the angry air.

FIRST MAN.

All seethes and surges !

EINAR.

What a yell

Rang through the storm !

A WOMAN.

'Twas from the fell.

ANOTHER

[*pointing up*].

See, there stands Gerd upon the cliff,  
Hallooing at the passing skiff !

FIRST WOMAN.

She's flinging pebbles like witch-corn,  
And blowing through a twisted horn.

SECOND WOMAN.

Now she has slung it like a wand,  
And pipes upon her hollow'd hand.

A MAN.

Ay, pipe away, thou troll abhorr'd !  
He has a Guide and Guard on board !

ANOTHER.

In a worse storm, with him to steer,  
I'd put to sea and never fear.

FIRST MAN

[to EINAR].

What is he ?

EINAR.

A priest.

SECOND MAN.

What is he, nay—

That's plain : he is a MAN, I say !  
Strong will is in him, and bold deed.

FIRST MAN.

THAT were the very priest we need !

MANY VOICES.

Ay, ay, the very priest we need !  
[*They disperse along the slopes*].

THE MAYOR

[*collecting his books and papers*].

Well, 'tis opposed to all routine  
To labour in a strange vocation,  
Intrusively to risk one's skin  
Without an adequate occasion.—

I do my duty with precision,—  
But always in my own Division.

[Goes.]

---

[*Outside the hut on the Ness. Late afternoon. The fjord is smooth and gleaming. AGNES is sitting by the beach. Presently BRAND comes out of the hut.*]

BRAND.

THAT was death. The horror-rifted  
Bosom at its touch grew whole.  
Now he looks a calm great soul,  
All illumined and uplifted.  
Has a false illusion might  
Out of gloom to win such light?  
Of his devil's-deed he saw  
Nothing but the outward flaw,—  
That of it which tongue can tell  
And to hands is palpable,—  
That for which his name's reviled,—  
The brute slaying of his child.

But those two, that sat and gazed  
With great frighten'd eyes, amazed,  
Speechless, like two closely couching  
Birdlets, in the ingle crouching,—  
Who but look'd, and look'd, and ever  
Look'd, unwitting upon what,—  
In whose souls a poison-spot  
Bit and sank, which they shall never  
Even as old men bent and gray,  
In Time's turmoil wear away,—

They, whose tide of Life proceeds  
From this fountain of affright,  
Who by dark and dreadful deeds  
Must be nurtured into light,  
Nor by any purging flames  
May that carrion thought consume,—  
This he saw not, being blind,  
That the direst of the doom  
Was the doom he left behind.

And from them shall haply rise  
Link'd offences, one by one.  
Wherefore? The abyss replies :  
From the father sprang the son !  
What shall be by Love erased ?  
What be quietly effaced ?  
Where, O where, does guilt begin  
In our heritage of sin ?  
What Assizes, what Assessors,  
When that Judgment is declared ?  
Who shall question, who be heard,  
Where we're all alike transgressors ?  
Who will venture then to plead  
His foul borrow'd title-deed ?  
Will the old answer profit yet :  
'From my father dates my debt' ?  
O, abysmal as the night,  
Riddle, who can read thee right !  
But the people dance light-footed,  
Heedless by the dizzy brink ;  
Where the soul should cry and shrink,  
None has vision to perceive  
What uptowering guilt is rooted  
In that little word : WE LIVE.

[*Some men of the community come from behind the house and approach BRAND.*]

A MAN.

We were to meet again, you see.

BRAND.

His need of human help has ceased.

THE MAN.

Yes ; he is ransom'd and released ;  
But in the chamber still sit three.

BRAND.

And what then ?

THE MAN.

Of the scraps we got  
Together, a few crumbs we've brought——

BRAND.

Though you give ALL, and life retain,  
I tell you that your gift is vain.

THE MAN.

Had he to-day, who now lies dead,  
By mortal peril been bested,  
And I had heard his foundering cry,  
I also would have dared to die.

BRAND.

But peril of the SOUL you slight ?

THE MAN.

Well, we're but drudgers day by day.

BRAND.

Then from the downward-streaming light  
Turn your eyes utterly away ;  
And cease to cast the left askance  
At heaven, while with the right you glance  
Down at the mould where, crouching low,  
Self-harness'd in the yoke you go.

THE MAN.

I thought you'd say we ought to shake us  
Free of the yoke we toil in ?

BRAND.

Yea,

If you are able.

THE MAN.

You can make us !

BRAND.

Can I ?

THE MAN.

Full many have been sent  
Who told us truly of the way ;  
The path they pointed to, you WENT.

BRAND.

You mean—— ?

THE MAN.

A thousand speeches brand  
Less deeply than one dint of deed.  
Here in our fellows' name we stand ;—  
We see, a MAN is what we need.

BRAND

[uneasily].

What will you with me ?

THE MAN.

Be our priest.

BRAND.

I ? Here !

THE MAN.

You've maybe heard it told,  
There is no pastor for this fold.

BRAND.

Yes ; I recall.

THE MAN.

The place of old  
Was large, which now is of the least.  
When evil seasons froze the field,  
And blight on herd and herdsman fell,  
When want struck down the Man, and seal'd  
The Spirit with its drowsing spell,  
When there was dearth of beef and brew,—  
THEN came a dearth of parsons too.

BRAND.

Aught else : but this ye must not ask !  
I'm summoned to a greater task.  
The great world's open ear I seek ;  
Through Life's vast organ I must speak.  
What should I here ? By mountains pent  
The voice of man falls impotent.



THE MAN.

By mountains echoed, longer heard  
Is each reverberating word.

BRAND.

Who in a cavern would be bound,  
When broad meads beckon all around ?  
Who'll sweat to plough the barren land  
When there are fruitful fields at hand ?  
Who'll rear his fruitage from the seed  
When orchards ripen to the skies ?  
Who'll struggle on with daily need  
When vision gives him wings and eyes ?

THE MAN

*[shaking his head].*

Your deed I fathom'd,—not your word.

BRAND

*[going].*

Question no more ! On board ! on board !

THE MAN

*[barring his way].*

This calling that you must fulfil,  
This work, whereon you've set your will,  
Is it so precious to you, say ?

BRAND.

It is my very life !

THE MAN.

Then stay !

*[Pointedly.]*

'Though you give all and life retain,  
Remember, that your gift is vain.'

BRAND.

ONE thing is yours you may not spend :  
Your very inmost Self of all.  
You may not bind it, may not bend,  
Nor stem the river of your call.  
To make for ocean is its end.

THE MAN.

Though tarn and moorland held it fast,—  
As dew 'twould reach the sea at last.

BRAND

*[looking fixedly at him].*

Who gave you power to answer thus ?

THE MAN.

You, by your deed, YOU gave it us.  
When wind and water raged and roar'd,  
And you launch'd out through wind and wave,  
When, a poor sinning soul to save,  
You set your life upon a board,  
Deep into many a heart it fell,  
Like wind and sunshine, cold and hot,  
Rang through them like a chiming bell,—

*[With lowered voice.]*

To-morrow, haply, all's forgot,  
And furl'd the kindling banner bright  
You just now lifted in our sight.

BRAND.

Duty is not, where power is not.

*[Sternly.]*

If you cannot be what you ought,  
Be in good earnest what you may ;  
Be heart and soul a man of clay.

## THE MAN

*[after gazing on him a moment].*

Woe ! you, who quench the lamp you lit ;  
And us, who had a glimpse of it !

*[He goes ; the others silently follow.]*

## BRAND

*[after long watching them].*

Homewards, one by one, with flagging  
Spirits, heavily and slow,  
Foreheads bowed, and weary lagging  
Footsteps, silently they go.  
Each with sorrow in his eyes,  
Walks as from a lifted rod,  
Walks like Adam spurn'd by God  
From the gates of Paradise,—  
Walks like him, with sin-veil'd sight,—  
Sees, like him, the gathering night,  
All his gain of knowledge shares,  
All his loss of blindness bears.  
I have boldly dared to plan  
The refashioning of Man,—  
—THERE'S my work,—Sin's image grown,  
Whom God moulded in His own.—  
Forth ! to wider fields away !  
Here's no room for battle-play !

*[Going ; but pauses as he sees AGNES by the  
beach.]*

See, she listens by the shore,  
As to airy songs afloat.  
So she listen'd in the boat  
As the stormy surge it tore,—

Listening, to the thwart she clung,—  
Listening still, the sea-foam hoar  
From her open forehead flung.

'Tis as though her ear were changing  
Function, and her eye were listening.

[*He approaches.*]

Maiden, is it o'er those glistening  
Reaches that your eye is ranging——?

AGNES

[*without turning round*].

Neither those nor aught of earth ;  
Nothing of them I descry.  
But a greater earth there gleams  
Sharply outlined on the sky,  
Foaming floods and spreading streams,  
Mists and sunshine breaking forth.  
Scarlet-shafted flames are playing  
Over cloud-capp'd mountain heads,  
And an endless desert spreads,  
Whereupon great palms are swaying  
In the bitter-breathing blast.  
Swart the shadows that they cast.  
Nowhere any living thing ;  
Like a new world at its birth ;  
And I hear strange accents ring,  
And a Voice interpreting :  
'Choose thy endless loss or gain,  
Do thy work and bear thy pain ;—  
Thou shalt people this new earth !'

BRAND

[*carried away*].

Say, what further !

## AGNES

*[laying her hand on her breast].*

In my soul  
I can feel new powers awaking,  
I can see a dayspring breaking,  
I can feel full floods that roll,  
And my heart grows larger, freer,  
Clasps the world within its girth,  
And a voice interprets : HERE  
Shalt thou people a new earth !  
All the thoughts that men shall utter,  
All the deeds men shall achieve,  
Waken, whisper, quiver, mutter,  
As if now they were to live ;  
And I rather feel than see  
Him who sits enthroned above,  
Feel that He looks down on me  
Full of sadness and of love,  
Tender-bright as morning's breath,  
And yet sorrowing unto death :  
And I hear strange accents wake :  
' Now thou must be made, and make ;  
Choose thy endless loss or gain ;—  
Do thy work and bear thy pain ! '

## BRAND.

Inwards ! In ! O word of might,  
Now I see my way aright.  
In OURSELVES is that young Earth,  
Ripe for the divine new-birth ;  
Will, the fiend, must THERE be slain,  
Adam THERE be born again.

Let the world then take its way,  
Brutal toil or giddy play ;  
But if e'er we meet in fight,  
If my work it seek to blight,  
Then, by heaven, I'll smite and slay !  
Room within the wide world's span,  
Self completely to fulfil,—  
That's a valid right of Man,  
And no more than that I will !

[*After pondering a while in silence.*]

To fulfil oneself ! And yet,  
With a heritage of debt ?

[*Pauses and looks out.*]

Who is she, that, stooping deep,  
Clambers hither up the steep,—  
Crooked back and craning crop ?  
Now for breath she has to stop,  
Clutches wildly lest she stumble,  
And her skinny fingers fumble  
Fierce for something that she drags  
In those deep and roomy bags.  
Skirt, like folds of feather'd skin,  
Dangling down her shrivell'd shin ;  
Hands, a pair of clenched hooks ;  
So the eagle's carcase looks  
Nail'd against the barn-door top.

[*In sudden anguish.*]

What chill memories upstart,—  
O what gusts from childhood dart  
Frosty showers on her—and other  
Fiercer frost upon my heart—?  
God of grace ! It is my Mother !

## BRAND'S MOTHER

*[comes up, stops when half seen above the slope, holds her hand up to shade her eyes, and looks round].*

He's here, they told me.

*[Coming nearer.]*

Drat the blaze,—

It nearly takes away my sight!

Son, is that you?

BRAND.

Yes.

HIS MOTHER

*[rubbing her eyes].*

Hoo, those rays,

They burn one's very eyes outright;

I can't tell priest from boor.

BRAND.

Sun's light

At home I never saw at all

'Twixt fall of leaf and cuckoo's call.

HIS MOTHER

*[laughing quietly].*

Ay, THERE 'tis good. One's gripp'd with frost

Like icicles o'er a plunging river,

Strong to DARE anything whatever,

—And yet believe one is not lost.

BRAND.

Farewell. My leisure time is spent.

HIS MOTHER.

Ay, thou wast ever loth to stay.

As boy thou long'dst to be away—

BRAND.

It was at your desire I went.

HIS MOTHER.

Ay, and good reason too, I say.  
'Twas needful thou shouldst be a priest.

[*Examines him more closely.*]

H'm, he is grown up strong and tall.  
But heed THIS word of mine, at least,—  
Care for thy life, son !

BRAND.

Is that all ?

HIS MOTHER.

Thy life ? What's dearer ?

BRAND.

I would say :  
Have you more counsels to convey ?

HIS MOTHER.

For others, use them as you may,  
And welcome. But thy life, O save it  
For my sake ; it was I that gave it.

[*Angrily.*]

Your mad deed's talk'd of far and near ;  
It scares and harrows me to hear.  
On such a day to dare the fjord,  
And squander what you're bound to hoard !  
You of our clan survive alone,  
You are my son, my flesh and bone ;  
The roof-tree beam that copes and clinches  
The house I've builded up by inches.

E



Stick fast ; hold out ; endure ; survive !  
Guard your life ! Never let it go !  
An heir is bound to keep alive,—  
And you 'll be mine—one day—you know——

BRAND.

Indeed ? And that was why you plann'd  
With loaded purse to seek me here ?

HIS MOTHER.

Son, are you raving ?

[*Steps back.*]

Don't come near  
Stay where you are ! You 'll feel my hand !

[*More calmly.*]

What were you meaning ?—Just attend !  
I'm getting older year by year ;  
Sooner or later comes the end ;  
Then you 'll inherit all I've treasured,  
'Tis duly counted, weigh'd and measured—  
Nay, nay, I've nothing on me now !—  
It's all at home. It is but scant ;  
But he that gets it will not want.  
Stand back there ! Don't come near !—I vow  
I'll fling no stiver of my store  
Down fissures, nor in spot unknown  
Hide any, nor below a stone,  
In wall, or underneath a floor ;  
All shall be yours, son, you shall be  
My sole and single legatee.

BRAND.

And the conditions ?

HIS MOTHER.

One I make,  
No more ; don't set your life at stake.  
Keep up our family and name,  
That's all the gratitude I claim.  
Then see that nothing go to waste,—  
Naught be divided or displaced ;—  
Add much or little, as you will ;  
But O preserve, preserve it still !

BRAND

*[after a short pause].*

One thing needs clearing 'twixt us two.  
From childhood I have thwarted you ;—  
You've been no mother, I no son,  
Till you are gray, my childhood gone.

HIS MOTHER.

I do not ask to be caress'd.  
Be what you please ; I am not nice.  
Be stern, be fierce, be cold as ice,  
It will not cleave my armour'd breast ;  
Keep, though you hoard it, what was mine,  
And never let it leave our line !

BRAND

*[going a step nearer].*

And if I took it in my head  
To strew it to the winds, instead ?

HIS MOTHER

*[reeling back].*

Strew, what through all these years of care  
Has bent my back and bleach'd my hair ?

## BRAND

BRAND

*[nodding slowly].*

To strew it.

HIS MOTHER

Strew it ! If you do,  
It is my soul that you will strew !

BRAND.

And if I do it, even so ?  
If I one evening vigil keep  
With lighted taper by your bed,  
While you with clasped Psalter sleep  
The first night's slumber of the dead,—  
If I then fumble round about,  
Draw treasure after treasure out,  
Take up the taper, hold it low— ?

HIS MOTHER

*[approaching excitedly].*

Whence comes this fancy ?

BRAND.

Would you know ?

HIS MOTHER.

Ay.

BRAND.

From a childish scene that still  
Lives in my mind, and ever will,  
That seems my soul with foul device  
Like an infestering cicatrice.  
It was an autumn evening. Dead  
Was father ; you lay sick in bed.  
I stole where he was laid by night,  
All pallid in the silver light.

I stood and watch'd him from my nook,  
Saw how his two hands clasp'd the Book ;  
I marvell'd why he slept so long,  
Mark'd his thin wrists, and smelt the strong  
Odour of linen newly dried ;—  
And then I heard a step outside ;—  
A woman enter'd, strode apace  
Up to the bed, nor saw my face.  
Then she began to grope and pry ;  
First put the corpse's vesture by,  
Drew forth a bundle, then a store,  
Counted, and whisper'd : There is more !  
Then, grubbing deeper in the ground,  
Clutch'd a seal'd packet tightly bound,  
With trembling fingers strove and tore,  
Bit it in two, groped deeper, found,  
Counted, and whisper'd : There is more !  
She cried, she cursed, she wail'd, she wept,  
She scented where the treasure lay,  
And then with eager anguish swept  
Down like a falcon on her prey.  
When she had ransack'd all the room,  
She turn'd, like one who hears her doom,  
Wrapp'd up her booty in a shawl,  
And faintly groan'd : So THAT was all !

## HIS MOTHER.

I needed much, I little won ;  
And very dearly was it bought.

## BRAND.

Even more dearly than you thought ;  
Son's-heart you shattered in your son.

## HIS MOTHER.

Tut tut. To barter hearts for gold  
Was customary from of old.  
Still dearer once I had to pay,—  
I think I gave my life away.  
Something I gave that now is not ;—  
I seem to see it flash in air  
Like something foolish and yet fair ;  
I gave—I know not rightly what ;—  
'Love' was the name it used to bear.—  
I know it was a bitter choice ;  
I know my father gave his voice :  
'Forget the peasant-boy, and wed  
The other, 'spite his frosty pate ;  
A fellow with a knowing head,  
He'll fairly double the estate !'  
I took him, and he brought me shame.  
The doubled gettings never came.  
But I have drudged with streaming brow,  
And there is little lacking now.

## BRAND.

And do you, as you near your grave,  
Know that it was your SOUL you gave ?

## HIS MOTHER.

It's clear that I knew THAT, at least,  
Giving my son to be a priest.  
When the hour comes, a grateful heir  
Of my salvation will take care ;  
I own the acres and the pence,  
And you, the deathbed eloquence.

\*

BRAND.

With all your cunning you mistook ;  
You read me wrong in childhood's book.  
And many dwell by bank and brae  
Who love their children in that way ;—  
A child's a steward, you suppose,  
Of the parental cast-off clothes ;  
A glimpse of the Eternal flits  
At times across your wandering wits ;  
You snatch at it, and dream you spring  
Into the essence of the thing  
By grafting Riches upon Race ;—  
That Death with Life you can displace,  
That years, if steadily amass'd,  
Will yield Eternity at last.

HIS MOTHER.

Don't rummage in your Mother's mind,  
But take what she will leave behind.

BRAND.

The debt as well ?

HIS MOTHER.

The debt ? What debt ?  
There is none.

BRAND.

Very good ; but yet  
Suppose there were,—I should be bound  
To settle every claim I found.  
The son must satisfy each call  
Before the mother's burial.  
Though but four empty walls I took,  
I still should own your debit-book.

## BRAND

HIS MOTHER.

No law commands it.

BRAND.

Not the kind  
 That ink on parchment ever writ ;  
 But deep in every honest mind  
 Another law is burnt and bit,—  
 And that I execute. Thou blind !  
 Learn to have sight ! Thou hast debased  
 The dwelling-place of God on earth,  
 The spirit He lent thee hast laid waste,  
 The image that thou bor'st at birth  
 With mould and filthiness defaced ;  
 Thy Soul, that once had flight and song,  
 Thrust, clipp'd, among the common throng.  
 That is your debt. What will you do  
 When God demands His own of you ?

HIS MOTHER

[*confused*].

What will I do ? Do !—

BRAND.

Never fear ;  
 I take your debt upon me whole.  
 God's image, blotted in your soul,  
 In mine, Will-cleansed, shall stand clear.  
 Go with good courage to your rest.  
 By debt you shall not sleep oppress'd.

HIS MOTHER.

My debt and sin you 'll wipe away ?

BRAND.

Your debt. Observe. The debt : no more !  
Your debt alone I can repay ;  
Your sin yourself must answer for.  
The sum of native human worth  
Crush'd in the brutish toil of earth  
Can verily by human aid  
To the last atom be repaid ;  
But in the LOSING of it lies  
The sin, which who repents not—dies !

HIS MOTHER.

[*uneasily*].

'Twere best I took my homeward way  
To the deep valley, to the gloom ;  
Such rank and poisonous fancies bloom  
In this insufferable ray ;  
I'm almost fainting at the fume.

BRAND.

Seek you the shadow ; I abide.  
And if you long for light and sky,  
And fain would see me ere you die,  
Call me, and I am by your side.

HIS MOTHER.

Yes, with a sermon on my doom !

BRAND.

No, tender both as priest and child  
I'll shield you from the wind of dread,  
And singing low beside your bed  
Lull to repose your anguish wild.

HIS MOTHER.

And that with lifted hand you swear ?



## BRAND

BRAND.

When you repent I will be there.

[*Approaching her.*]

But I too make conditions. Hear.  
Whatever in this world is dear  
Willingly you must from you rend,  
And naked to the grave descend.

HIS MOTHER

[*wildly repulsing him.*]

Bid fire be sever'd from its heat,  
Snow from its cold, wave from its wet !  
Ask less !

BRAND.

Toss a babe overboard,  
And beg the blessing of the Lord.

HIS MOTHER.

Ask something else : ask hunger, thirst,—  
But not what all men deem the worst !

BRAND.

If just that worst is asked in vain,  
No other can His grace obtain.

HIS MOTHER.

A money-alm I will present you !

BRAND.

ALL ?

HIS MOTHER.

All ! Son, will not much content you ?

BRAND.

Your guilt you never shall put by  
Till you, like Job, in ashes die.

HIS MOTHER

*[wringing her hands].*

My life destroy'd, my soul denied,  
 My goods soon scatter'd far and wide !  
 Home then, and in these fond arms twine  
 All that I still can say is MINE !  
 My treasure, child in anguish born,  
 For thee my bleeding breast was torn ;—  
 Home then, and weep as mothers weep  
 Over their sickly babes asleep.—  
 Why did my soul in flesh take breath,  
 If love of flesh is the soul's death ?—  
 Stay near me, priest !—I am not clear  
 How I shall feel when death is near.  
 'Naked into the grave descend,'—  
 I'll wait, at least, until the end.

*[Goes.]*

BRAND

*[gazing after her].*

Yes, thy son shall still be near,  
 Call to him, and he shall hear.  
 Stretch thy hand, and, cold and perish'd,  
 At his heart it shall be cherish'd.

*[Goes down to AGNES.]*

As the Morn not so the Night.  
 Then my soul was set on fight,  
 Then I heard the war-drum rattle,  
 Yearn'd the sword of Wrath to swing,  
 Lies to trample, Trolls to fling,  
 Fill the world with clashing battle.

## AGNES

*[has turned round to him, and looks  
radiantly up].*

By the Night the Morn was pale.  
Then I sought the joys that fail ;  
Sought to triumph by attaining  
What in losing I am gaining.

## BRAND.

Visions stirring, visions splendid  
Like a flock of swans descended,  
On their spreading wings upbore me,  
And I saw my way before me ;—  
Sin-subduer of the Age  
Sternly stemming seas that rage.  
Church-processions, banners streaming,  
Anthems rolling, incense steaming,  
Golden goblets, victor-songs,  
Rapt applause of surging throngs,  
Made a glory where I fought.  
All in dazzling hues was wrought ;—  
Yet it was an empty dream,  
A brief mountain-vision, caught  
Half in glare and half in gleam.

Now I stand where twilight gray  
Long forestalls the ebb of day,  
'Twixt the water and the wild,  
From the busy world exiled,  
Just a strip of heaven's blue dome  
Visible ;—but this is HOME.  
Now my Sabbath dream is dark ;  
To the stall my winged steed ;  
But I see a higher Mark

Than to wield the knightly sabre,—  
Daily duty, daily labour,  
Hallow'd to a Sabbath-deed.

AGNES.

And that God, who was to fall ?

BRAND.

He shall, none the less, be fell'd,—  
But in secret, unbeheld,  
Not before the eyes of all.  
Now I see, I judged astray  
Where the Folk's salvation lay.  
Not by high heroic charges  
Can you make the People whole ;  
That which faculty enlarges  
Does not heal the fissured soul.  
It is WILL alone that matters !  
Will alone that mars or makes,  
Will, that no distraction scatters,  
And that no resistance breaks.—

*[Turns towards the hamlet, where the shades  
of night are beginning to fall.]*

Come then, Men, who downcast roam  
The pent valley of my home ;—  
Close conversing we will try  
Our own souls to purify,  
Slackness curb and falsehood kill,  
Rouse the lion's cub of Will !  
Manly, as the hands that smite,  
Are the hands that hold the hoe ;  
There's ONE end for all,—to grow  
Tablets whereon God may write.

*[He is going, EINAR confronts him.]*

EINAR.

Stand, and what you took restore !

BRAND.

Is it she ? You see her there.

EINAR

[to AGNES].

Choose between the sunny shore  
And this savage den of care.

AGNES.

There I have no choice to make.

EINAR.

Agnes, Agnes, hear me yet !  
The old saying you forget,  
Light to lift and hard to bear.

AGNES.

Go with God, thou tempter fair ;  
I shall bear until I break.

EINAR.

For thy mother's, sisters' sake !

AGNES.

Bring my greetings to my Home ;  
I will write—if words should come.

EINAR.

Over ocean's gleaming breast  
White sails hurry from the strand ;—  
Like the sighs of dreaming brows,  
Lofty, diamond-beaded prows  
Speed them to their haven-rest  
In a far-off vision'd land.

AGNES.

Sail to westward, sail to east ;—  
Think of me as one deceased.

EINAR.

As a sister come with me.

AGNES

*[shaking her head].*

'Twixt us rolls a boundless sea.

EINAR.

O, then homeward to thy mother !

AGNES

*[softly].*

Not from Master, Friend, and Brother.

BRAND

*[coming a step nearer].*

Youthful maiden, weigh it well  
In this mountain-prison pent,  
Oversoar'd by crag and fell,  
In this dim and yawning rent,  
Life henceforward shall be gray  
As an ebbing autumn-day.

AGNES.

Gloom appals no more ; afar  
Through the cloud-wrack gleams a star.

BRAND.

Know, that I am stern to crave,  
ALL or NOTHING I will have ;  
If that call you disobey,  
You have flung your life away.

No abatement in distress,  
And for sin no tenderness,—  
If life's service God refuse,  
Life you joyfully must lose.

EINAR.

Fly this wild insensate play !  
Spurn the sullen Doomer's sway ;  
Live the life you know you may !

BRAND.

At the crossway standst thou :—choose.

[*Goes.*]

EINAR.

Choose the stillness or the strife !  
For the choice to GO or STAY  
Is a choice of calm or fray,  
Is a choice of Night or Day,  
Is a choice of Death or Life !

AGNES

[*rises, and then says slowly*] :

On through Death. On into Night.—  
Dawn beyond glows rosy-bright.

[*She follows, where BRAND has gone. EINAR gazes a moment in bewilderment after her, then bows his head, and goes back to the fjord.*]

## THE THIRD ACT

*[Three years later. A little garden by the Parsonage. A great precipice above, a stone wall round. The fjord, narrow and pent in, appears in the background. The house-door opens upon the garden. Afternoon.]*

BRAND *is standing on the steps outside the house.*

AGNES *is sitting on the step at his feet.]*

AGNES.

My dearest husband, still your eye  
Over the fjord roves anxiously——

BRAND.

I wait a summons.

AGNES.

With brows bent !

BRAND.

My Mother's summons. This three years  
I've waited between hopes and fears  
The summons that was never sent.  
To-day 'twas told me, past a doubt,  
That her life's span is almost out.

AGNES

*[softly and tenderly].*

Brand, WITHOUT summons you should go ?

R



BRAND

*[shakes his head]*

Till she of her offence repent  
I have no comfort to bestow.

AGNES

She is your mother !

BRAND.

It were sin  
To worship idols in my kin.

AGNES.

Brand, you are stern !

BRAND.

To you ?

AGNES.

Oh no !

BRAND.

I warn'd you that the way was steep.

AGNES

*[smiling].*

It was not true ; you did not keep  
Your word.

BRAND.

Yes, here the ice-wind rives ;  
Your cheek has lost its youthful glow,  
Your tender heart is touch'd with snow.  
Our home is built where nothing thrives,  
Amid a barren waste of stone.

AGNES.

It lies the safer, then ! So prone  
Beetles yon jutting mountain-wall,  
That, when the leafy spring is near,  
The brimming avalanche vaults sheer  
Over our heads, and we lie clear  
As in the hollow of a fall.

BRAND.

The sun we never see at all.

AGNES.

Oh, yet he dances warm and bright  
Atop yon mountain that we face.

BRAND.

For three weeks, true,—at summer's height,—  
But never struggles to its base !

AGNES

*[looks fixedly at him, rises and says].*

Brand, there's ONE thought at which you shrink.

BRAND.

No, you !

AGNES.

No, you !

BRAND.

Within you bear

A secret terror.

AGNES.

Which you share !

BRAND.

You reel as from a dizzy brink !  
Out with it ! speak it out !

BRAND

AGNES.

'Tis true

I've trembled, whiles ——

[*Hesitates.*]

BRAND.

Trembled ! At what ?

AGNES.

For Alf.

BRAND.

For Alf ?

AGNES.

And so have you !

BRAND.

At times. But no, God takes him not !  
God's merciful ! My child shall grow  
To be a strong man yet, I know.  
Where is he now ?

AGNES.

He's sleeping.

BRAND

[*looks in through the door.*]

See ;

Of pain and grief he dreams not, he ;  
The little hand is plump and round——

AGNES.

Yet pale.

BRAND.

But that will pass.

AGNES.

How deep,  
Restful and quickening is his sleep.

BRAND.

God bless thee ; in thy sleep grow sound !

[*Shuts the door.*]

To all my labours you and he  
Have brought light and tranquillity ;  
Each irksome task, each mournful care,  
'Twas easy, in your midst, to bear ;  
You near, I never felt dismay,  
Grew braver by his baby-play.  
A martyrdom I held my Call,  
But something has transform'd it all,—  
Success still follows my footfall.

AGNES.

Yes, Brand ; but you DESERVE success.  
Oh, you have battled, in storm and stress ;—  
Toil'd on through woe and weariness ;—  
But tears of blood you wept, apart——

BRAND.

And yet it seem'd so light a thing ;  
With you, love stole upon my heart  
Like a glad sunny day in Spring.  
In me Love never had been lit ;  
No parents' hand had kindled it,  
Rather they quench'd the fitful flashes  
That gleam'd at moments in the ashes.  
It was as though the tender Soul  
That mute and darkling in me slept,  
Had, closely garner'd, all been kept  
To be my sweet Wife's aureole.

AGNES.

Not mine alone : but whosoe'er  
In our great Household has a share,  
Each sorrowing son, each needy brother,  
Each weeping child, each mourning mother,  
Of quickening nurture have their part,  
At the rich banquet of thy heart.

BRAND.

Only through you two. By your hand  
That heavenly bridge of love was spann'd ;  
No single soul can all contain  
Except it first have yearn'd for ONE.  
I had to long and yearn in vain,  
So my heart harden'd into stone.

AGNES.

And yet—your love is merciless ;  
You chasten whom you would caress.

BRAND.

You, Agnes ?

AGNES.

Me ? O nay, dear, nay !  
On me a lightsome load you lay.  
But many falter at the call  
To offer NOTHING or else ALL.

BRAND.

What the world calls by that name 'Love,'  
I know not and I reck not of.  
God's love I recognise alone,  
Which melts not at the piteous plaint,  
Which is not moved by dying groan,  
And its caress is chastisement.

What answer'd through the olive-trees  
God, when the Son in anguish lay,  
Praying, 'O take this cup away !'  
DID He then take it? Nay, child, nay :  
He made him drink it to the lees.

AGNES.

By such a measure meted, all  
The souls of earth are forfeited.

BRAND.

None knows on whom the doom shall fall ;  
But God in flaming speech hath said :  
'Be faithful through the hour of strife :  
Haggling wins not the crown of life !'  
Anguish'd repentance scales not heaven,  
The martyr's doom you must fulfil.  
That you lack'd STRENGTH may be forgiven,—  
But never that you wanted WILL.

AGNES.

Yes, it shall be as you have said ;  
O lift me to those heights you tread ;  
To your high heaven lead me forth,  
My spirit is strong, my flesh is frail ;  
Oft, anguish-struck, I faint, I fail,—  
My clogg'd foot drags upon the earth.

BRAND.

See, child ; of all men God makes one  
Demand : No coward compromise !  
Whose work s half done or falsely done,  
Condemn'd with God his whole work lies.  
We must give sanction to this teaching  
By LIVING it and not by preaching.

AGNES

*[throws herself on his neck].*

Lead where you will ; I follow you !

BRAND.

No precipice is too steep for two.

*[Enter the DOCTOR ; he has come down the road, and stops outside the garden fence.]*

THE DOCTOR.

Ha ! loving doves at their caresses  
In these dark craggy wildernesses ?

AGNES.

My dear old Doctor, here at last !  
Come in, come in !*[Runs down and opens the garden-gate.]*

THE DOCTOR.

Ho, not so fast !

We've first to settle an old score.—  
What ! Tie yourself to this wild moor,  
Where piercing winds of winter tear  
Like ice, soul, body to the core——

BRAND.

Not soul.

THE DOCTOR.

Not ? Well, I must admit,  
That seems about the truth of it.  
Your hasty compact has an air  
Of standing firm, unmoved, erect,  
Though otherwise, one might expect,  
By ancient usage, soon to fade  
That which so suddenly was made.

AGNES.

A sunbeam's kiss, a bell's note, may  
Awaken for a summer's day.

THE DOCTOR.

A patient waits for me. Farewell.

BRAND.

My mother?

THE DOCTOR.

Yes. You also go?

BRAND.

Not now.

THE DOCTOR.

HAVE been, I daresay?

BRAND.

No.

THE DOCTOR.

Priest, you are hard. Through mist and snow  
I've trudged across the desolate fell,  
Well knowing that she is of those  
Who pay like paupers.

BRAND.

May God bless

Your skill and your unweariedness!  
Ease, if you can, her bitter throes.

THE DOCTOR.

Bless my goodwill! I tarried not  
A moment when I heard her state.

BRAND.

You she has summon'd: I'm forgot,—  
And sick at heart, I wait, I wait.



## BRAND

THE DOCTOR. .

Come without summons !

BRAND.

Till she calls,

I have no place within those walls.

THE DOCTOR

[to AGNES].

You hapless blossom, laid within

The pitiless grasp of such a lord !

BRAND.

I am not pitiless.

AGNES.

He had pour'd

His blood, to wash her soul from sin !

BRAND.

Unask'd, upon myself I took

The clearance of her debit-book.

THE DOCTOR.

Clear off your own !

BRAND.

ONE man may get

Hundreds acquitted, in God's eyes.

THE DOCTOR.

Ay ; not a Beggar though, who lies

Himself o'er head and ears in debt.

BRAND.

Beggar or rich,—with all my soul

I WILL ;—and that one thing 's the WHOLE !

THE DOCTOR.

Yes, in your ledger, truly, Will  
Has enough entries and to spare :  
But, priest, your LOVE-account is still  
A virgin-chapter, blank and bare.

[Goes.]

BRAND

*[follows him awhile with his eyes].*

Never did word so sorely prove  
The smirch of lies, as this word LOVE :  
With devilish craft, where will is frail,  
Men lay LOVE over, as a veil,  
And cunningly conceal thereby  
That all their life is coquetry.  
Whose path's the steep and perilous slope,  
LET HIM BUT LOVE,—and he may shirk it ;  
If he prefer Sin's easy circuit,  
LET HIM BUT LOVE,—he still may hope ;  
If Good he seeks, but fears the fray,  
LET HIM BUT LOVE,—'tis straight his prey ;  
If with wide-open eyes he err,  
LET HIM BUT LOVE,—there's safety there !

AGNES.

Yes, it is false : yet still I fall  
Questioning : Is it, after all ?

BRAND.

ONE point's omitted : First the Will  
Law's thirst for righteousness must still.  
You must FIRST will ! Not only things  
Attainable, in more or less,  
Nor only where the action brings  
Some hardship and some weariness ;

No, you must will with flashing eyes  
Your way through all earth's agonies.  
It is not martyrdom to toss  
In anguish on the deadly cross :  
But to have WILL'D to perish so,  
To WILL it through each bodily throe,  
To will it with still-tortured mind,  
This, only this, redeems mankind.

AGNES

*[clinging closely to him].*

If at the terrible call I cower,  
Speak, strong-soul'd husband, in that hour !

BRAND.

If Will has conquer'd in that strife,  
THEN comes at length the hour of Love ;  
Then it descends like a white dove,  
Bearing the olive-leaf of life :  
But in this nerveless, slothful state,  
The true, the sovereign Love is—Hate !

*[In horror.]*

Hate ! Hate ! O Titan's toil, to will  
That one brief easy syllable !

*[Goes hurriedly into the house.]*

AGNES

*[looking through the open door].*

He kneels beside his little son,  
And heaves as if with bursts of tears ;  
He clutches close the bed, like one  
That knows no refuge from his fears.—

O what a wealth of tender ruth  
 Lies hidden in this breast of steel !  
 Alf he DARES love : the baby-heel  
 Has not yet felt Earth's serpent-tooth.  
     *[Cries out in terror.]*  
 Ha ! he leaps up with ashy brow !  
 Wringing his hands ! what sees he now ?

BRAND

*[coming out].*

A summons came ?

AGNES.

No summons, no !

BRAND

*[looking back into the house].*

His parch'd skin burns in fever-glow ;  
 His temples throb, his pulses race—— !  
 Oh fear not, Agnes !

AGNES.

God of grace—— !

BRAND.

Nay, have no fear——

*[Calls out over the road.]*

The summons, see !

A MAN

*[through the garden-gate].*

You must come now, priest !

BRAND.

Instantly !

What message ?

## BRAND

## THE MAN.

A mysterious one.  
Sitting in bed she forward bent,  
And said : 'Get the priest here : begone !  
My half-goods for the sacrament.'

## BRAND

[starts back].

Her HALF-goods ! No ! Say no !

## THE MAN

[shakes his head].

My word

Would then not utter what I heard.

## BRAND.

HALF ! HALF ! It was the WHOLE she meant !

## THE MAN.

Maybe ; but she spoke loud and high ;  
And I don't easily forget.

## BRAND

[seizes his arm].

Before God's Judgment, will you yet  
Dare to attest she spoke it ?

## THE MAN.

Ay.

## BRAND

[firmly].

Go, tell her, this reply was sent :  
'Nor priest shall come, nor sacrament.

THE MAN

*[looking at him doubtfully].*

You surely have not understood :  
It is your Mother that appeals.

BRAND.

I know no law that sternlier deals  
With strangers than with kindred blood.

THE MAN.

A hard word, that.

BRAND.

She knows the call,—  
To offer NOTHING, or else ALL.

THE MAN.

Priest !

BRAND.

Dock the gold-calf as she will,  
Say, it remains an idol still.

THE MAN.

The scourge you send her I will lay  
As gently on her as I may.  
She has this comfort left her, too :  
God is not quite so hard as you !

*[Goes.]*

BRAND.

Yes, with that comfort's carrion-breath  
The world still sickens unto death ;  
Prompt, in its need, with shriek and song  
To lubricate the Judge's tongue.

Of course ! The reasonable plan !  
For from of old they know their man ;—  
Since all his works the assurance breathe :  
'Yon gray-beard may be haggled with !'

[THE MAN *has met another man on the road ;  
they come back together*].

BRAND.

A second message !

FIRST MAN.

Yes.

BRAND

[*to the SECOND MAN*].

Consent ?

SECOND MAN.

Nine-tenths of it is now the word.

BRAND.

Not ALL ?

SECOND MAN.

Not all.

BRAND.

As you have heard :—

Nor priest shall come, nor sacrament.

SECOND MAN.

She begg'd it, bitterly distress'd——

FIRST MAN.

Priest, once she bore you on her breast !

BRAND

*[clenching his hands].*

I may not by two measures weigh  
My kinsman and my enemy.

SECOND MAN.

Sore is her state and dire her need ;  
Come, or else send her a God-speed !

BRAND

*[to FIRST MAN].*

Go ; tell her still : God's wine and bread  
Must on a spotless board be spread.

*[The Men go.]*

AGNES.

I tremble, Brand. You seem a Sword  
Swung flaming by a wrathful Lord !

BRAND

*[with tears in his voice].*

Does not the world face me no less  
With swordless sheath upon its thigh ?  
Am I not torn and baffled by  
Its dull defiant stubbornness ?

AGNES.

A hard condition you demand.

BRAND.

Dare you impose a lighter ?

AGNES.

Lay

That stern demand on whom you may,  
And see who, tested so, will stand.

G



BRAND.

Nay, you have reason for that fear.  
 So base, distorted, barren, sere,  
 The aspiring soul in men is grown.  
 'Tis thought a marvel,—by bequest  
 To give away one's wealth unknown,  
 And be anonymously bless'd.  
 The hero, bid him blot his name,  
 Content him with the service wrought,  
 Kings, Kaisers, bid them do the same,—  
 And see how many fields are fought !  
 The poet, bid him un beholden  
 Loose his bright fledglings from the cage,  
 So that none dream HE gave that golden  
 Plumage, and HE that vocal rage ;  
 Try the green bough, or try the bare,  
 SACRIFICE is not anywhere.  
 Earth has enslaved all earthly things ;—  
 Over Life's precipices cast,  
 Each to its mouldering branches clings,  
 And, if they crumble, clutches fast  
 With tooth and nail to straws and bast !

AGNES.

And, while they helpless, hopeless fall,  
 You cry : Give NOTHING or give ALL !

BRAND.

He who would conquer still must fight,  
 Rise, fallen, to the highest height.

[*A brief silence : his voice changes.*]

And yet, when with that stern demand  
 Before some living soul I stand,

I seem like one that floats afar  
Storm-shatter'd on a broken spar.  
With solitary anguish wrung  
I've bitten this chastising tongue,  
And thirsted, as I aim'd the blow,  
To clasp the bosom of my foe.

Go, Agnes, watch the sleeping boy,  
And sing him into dreams of joy.  
An infant's soul is like the sleep  
Of still clear tarns in summer-light.  
A mother over it may sweep  
And hover, like the bird, whose flight  
Is mirror'd in the deepest deep.

AGNES.

What does it mean, Brand? Wheresoe'er  
You aim your thought-shafts—they fly THERE!

BRAND.

Oh, nothing. Softly watch the child.

AGNES.

Give me a watchword.

BRAND.

Stern?

AGNES.

No, mild.

BRAND

[*clasping her*].

The blameless shall not taste the grave.

AGNES

[*looking brightly up at him*].

Then ONE is ours God may not crave!

[*Goes into the house.*]

BRAND

*[looking fixedly before him].*

But if he MIGHT? What 'Isaac's Fear'  
Once ventured, He may venture here.

*[Shakes off the thought.]*

No, no, my sacrifice is made,  
The calling of my life gainsaid—  
Like the Lord's thunder to go forth  
And rouse the sleepers of the earth.  
Sacrifice! Liar! there was none!  
I miss'd it when my Dream was done,  
When Agnes woke me—and follow'd free  
To labour in the gloom with me.

*[Looks along the road.]*

Why tarries still the dying call,  
Her word, that she will offer all,  
That she has won that which uproots  
Sin's deepest fibres, rankest shoots!  
See there——! No, it is but the Mayor,  
Well-meaning, brisk, and debonnaire,  
Both hands in pockets, round, remiss,  
A bracketed parenthesis.

*[Enter MAYOR.]*

THE MAYOR.

*[through the garden gate].*

Good-day! Our meetings are but rare,  
Perhaps my time is chosen amiss——

BRAND

*[pointing to house].*

Come in.

THE MAYOR.

Thanks ; here I'm quite content.  
Should my proposal meet assent,  
I'm very sure the upshot of it  
Would issue in our common profit.

BRAND.

Name your desire.

THE MAYOR.

Your mother's state,  
I understand, is desperate.  
I'm sorry.

BRAND.

That I do not doubt.

THE MAYOR.

I'm VERY sorry.

BRAND.

Pray, speak out.

THE MAYOR.

She's old, however. Welladay,  
We are all bound the selfsame way !—  
And, as I just drove by, occur'd  
The thought that, after all, ' to leap  
Is just as easy as to creep ' :  
Moreover, many have averr'd,  
That she and you have been imbrued  
For years in a domestic feud——

BRAND.

Domestic feud ?

*BRAND*

THE MAYOR.

She's out and out  
Close-fisted, so they say, you know.  
You think it goes too far, no doubt.  
A man's own claims he can't forego.  
She keeps exclusive occupation  
Of all that was bequeath'd to you.

BRAND.

Exclusive occupation, true.

THE MAYOR.

A ready cause of irritation  
In families. Surmising thence  
That you await with resignation  
The moment of her going hence,  
I hope I may without offence  
Speak out, although I quite admit  
The time I've chosen is unfit.

BRAND.

Or now or later, nought I care.

THE MAYOR.

Well, to the point then, fair and square.  
When once your mother's dead and blest,  
In the earth's bosom laid to rest,  
You're RICH !

BRAND.

You think so ?

THE MAYOR.

Think ? Nay, man,  
That's sure. She's land in every port,  
Far as a telescope can scan.  
You're rich !

BRAND.

'Spite the Succession Court ?

THE MAYOR.

[*smiling*].

What of it ? That cuts matters short  
When many fight for pelf and debt.  
Here no man's interest suffers let.

BRAND.

And what if some day, all the same,  
Came a co-heir to debt and pelf  
Crying : ' I'm he ! ' and urged his claim ?

THE MAYOR.

He'd have to be the devil himself !  
Just look to me ! None else has here  
The smallest right to interfere.  
I know my business : lean on me !  
Well, then ; you'll now be well-to-do,  
Rich even ; you'll no longer brook  
Life in this God-forsaken nook ;  
The whole land's open now to you.

BRAND.

Mayor, is not what you want to say,  
Pithily put, just : ' Go away ' ?

THE MAYOR.

Pretty much that. All parties' good  
Were so best answered. If you would  
But eye attentively the herd  
To whom you minister God's word,  
You'd find you're no more of a piece  
With them than foxes are with geese.

Pray, understand me ! You have gifts,  
Good where the social field is wide,  
But dangerous for folk whose pride  
Is to be Lords of rocky rifts  
And Freemen of the ravine-side.

BRAND.

To a man's feet his native haunt  
Is as unto the tree the root.  
If there his labour fill no want  
His deeds are doom'd, his music mute.

THE MAYOR.

Success means just : Self-adaptation  
To the requirements of the nation.

BRAND.

Which from the heights you best o'erlook,  
Not from the crag-encompass'd nook.

THE MAYOR.

That talk is fit for citizens,  
Not for poor peasants of the glens.

BRAND.

O, still your limitation vain  
Between the mountain and the plain !  
World-citizens you'd be of right,  
While every civic claim you slight ;  
And think, like dastards, to go free  
By whining : ' We're a small folk, we ! '

THE MAYOR.

All has its time, each time its need,  
Each age its proper work to do ;  
We also flung our mite into  
The world's great treasure of bold deed.

True, that 's long since ; but, after all,  
The mite was not so very small.  
Now the land 's dwindled and decay'd,  
But our renown still lives in story.  
The days of our reputed glory  
Were when the great King Belë sway'd.  
Many a tale is still related  
About the brothers Wulf and Thor,  
And gallant fellows by the score,  
Went harrying to the British shore,  
And plunder'd till their heart was sated.  
The Southrons shriek'd with quivering lip,  
'Lord, help us from these fierce men's grip,'  
And these 'fierce men,' beyond all doubt,  
Had from our harbours sallied out.  
And how these rovers wreak'd their ire,  
And dealt out death with sword and fire !  
Nay, legend names a lion-hearted  
Hero that took the cross ; in verity,  
It is not mention'd that he started——

BRAND.

He left behind a large posterity,  
This promise-maker ?

THE MAYOR.

Yes, indeed ;  
But how came you to —— ?

BRAND.

O, I read  
His features clearly in the breed  
Of promise-heroes of to-day,  
Who take the Cross in just his way.



## THE MAYOR.

Yes, his descendants still remain.  
But we were on King Belë's reign !  
So first abroad we battled. Then,  
Visited our own countrymen  
And kinsmen, with the axe and fire ;  
Trampled their harvests gaily down,  
Scorch'd mansion-wall and village spire,  
And wove ourselves the hero's crown.—  
Over the blood thus set a-flowing  
There's been perhaps excessive crowing ;  
But, after what I've said, I may,  
I think, without a touch of vanity,  
Point backward to the stir we made  
In the great Age long since decay'd,  
And hold that we indeed have paid  
Our little mite of Fire and Fray  
Towards the Progress of Humanity.

## BRAND.

Yet do you not, in fact, eschew  
The phrase, ' Nobility's a trust,'—  
And drive hoe, plough, and harrow through  
King Belë's patrimonial dust ?

## THE MAYOR.

By no means. Only go and mark  
Our parish on its gaudy-nights,  
Where I with Constable and Clerk,  
And Judge, preside as leading lights ;  
You'll warrant, when the punch goes round,  
King Belë's memory is sound.

With toasts and clinking cups and song,  
 In speeches short and speeches long,  
 We drink his health and sound his fame.  
 I myself often feel inclined  
 The spinnings of my brain to wind  
 In flowery woof about his name,  
 And edify the local mind.  
 A little poetry pleases me,  
 And all our folks, in their degree ;  
 But—moderation everywhere !  
 In LIFE it never must have share,—  
 Except at night, when folks have leisure,  
 Between the hours of seven and ten,  
 When baths of elevating pleasure  
 May fit the mood of weary men.  
 Here's where we differ, you and we,  
 That you desire with main and might  
 At the same time to PLOUGH and FIGHT.  
 Your scheme, as far as I can see,  
 Is : Life and Faith in unity,—  
 God's warfare and potato-dressing  
 Inseparably coalescing,  
 As coal, salt, sulphur, fusing fast,  
 Evolve just gunpowder at last.

BRAND.

Somewhat so.

THE MAYOR.

Here you'll scheme in vain !  
 Out in the great world that may stand ;—  
 Go thither with your big demand,  
 And let us plough our moors and main.

BRAND.

Plough first your brag of old renown  
Into the main, and plough it down !  
The pigmy is not more the man  
For being of Goliath's clan.

THE MAYOR.

Great memories bear the seed of growth.

BRAND.

Yes, MEMORIES that to LIFE are bound ;  
But you, of memory's empty mound,  
Have made a stalking-horse for sloth.

THE MAYOR.

I said at first, and still I say :—  
To leave us were the wisest way.  
Your work here cannot come to good,  
Nor your ideas be understood.  
The little flights to purer air,  
The lifting-up which, now and then,  
Is doubtless well for working men,  
Shall be MY unremitting care.  
Many agreeable facts declare  
My ceaseless energy as mayor,—  
Through me the population's grown  
Double, nay, almost three to one,  
Since for the district I have bred  
Ever new ways of getting fed.  
With stubborn nature still at strife  
We've steam'd ahead : our forward march  
Here hew'd a road, there flung an arch—  
To lead from——

BRAND.

Not from Faith to Life.

THE MAYOR.

To lead from fjordside to the hill.

BRAND.

But not from Doctrine unto Will.

THE MAYOR.

First of all, get a passage clear  
From men to men, from place to place.  
There were no two opinions here  
On that, until you show'd your face.  
Now you've made all confusion, dashing  
Aurora-flames with lantern-light ;  
With such cross-luminaries flashing,  
Who can distinguish wrong from right,  
Tell what will mar, and what will mend ?  
All diverse things you mix and blend,  
And into hostile camps divide  
Those who should triumph side by side.

BRAND.

Here, notwithstanding, I abide.  
Man chooses not his labour's sphere.  
Who knows and follows out his call,  
Has seen God's writing on the wall,  
In words of fire, 'Your place is here !'

THE MAYOR.

Stay, then, but keep within your borders ;  
You're free to purge the folk of crimes,  
Vices, and other rife disorders ;  
God knows, it's needed oftentimes !

But don't make every working-day  
A Sabbath, and your flag display,  
As if the Almighty were on board  
Of every skiff that skims the fjord.

BRAND.

To use your counsel, I must change  
My soul and all her vision's range ;  
But we are called, OURSELVES to be,  
Our own cause bear to victory ;  
And I will bear it, till the land  
Is all illumined where I stand !  
The people, your bureaucrat-crew  
Have lull'd asleep, shall wake anew ;  
Too long you 've cramp'd and caged apart  
These remnants of the Mountain heart ;  
Out of your niggard hunger-cure  
They pass dejected, dull, demure :  
Their best, their bravest blood you tap,  
Scoop out their marrow and their sap,  
Pound into splinters every soul,  
That should have stood a welded whole ;—  
But you may live to hear the roar  
Of revolution thunder : WAR !

THE MAYOR.

War ?

BRAND.

War !

THE MAYOR.

Be sure, if you should call  
To arms, you 'll be the first to fall.

BRAND.

The day will come when we shall know  
That triumph's height is Overthrow.

THE MAYOR.

Consider, Brand, you have to choose !  
Don't stake your fortune on one card.

BRAND.

I do, however !

THE MAYOR.

If you lose,  
Your life's irreparably marr'd.  
All this world's bounties you possess,  
You, a rich Mother's only heir,  
With wife and child to be your care,—  
It was a kindly hand, confess,  
That dealt YOUR terms of happiness !

BRAND.

And what if I should, all the same,  
Reject these terms ? and MUST ?

THE MAYOR.

Your game

Is over, if you 've once unfurl'd  
In this last cranny of the world  
The standard of your world-wide war.  
Turn southward, to yon prosperous shore  
Where a man dares lift up his head ;  
There you may perorate of right  
And bid them bleed and bid them fight ;  
OUR bloodshed is the sweat we pour  
In daily wringing rocks for bread.

## BRAND

BRAND.

Here I remain. My home is here,  
And here the battle-flag I'll rear !

THE MAYOR.

Think what you lose, if overthrown,  
And, chiefly, think of what you quit !

BRAND.

Myself I lose, if I submit.

THE MAYOR.

Hopeless is he that fights alone.

BRAND.

The BEST are with me.

THE MAYOR

[*smiling*].

That may be,  
But they 're the MOST, who follow ME.

[*Goes.*]

BRAND

[*looking after him*].

A people's champion thorough-bred !  
Active, with fair and open hand,  
Honest of heart and sound of head,  
But yet a scourge upon the land !  
No avalanche, no winter-blast,  
No flood, nor frost, nor famine-fast  
Leaves half the ruin in its rear  
That such a man does, year by year.  
LIFE only by a plague is reft ;  
But he—— ! How many a thought is cleft,

How many an eager will made numb,  
 How many a valiant song struck dumb  
 By such a narrow soul as this !  
 What smiles on simple faces breaking,  
 What fires in lowly bosoms waking,  
 What pangs of joy and anger, seed  
 That might have ripen'd into deed,  
 Die by that bloodless blade of his !

*[Suddenly, in anxiety.]*

But O the summons ! the summons !—No !  
 It is the Doctor !

*[Enter DOCTOR.]*

*[Hurries to meet him.]*

Say ! say ! How—— ?

THE DOCTOR.

She stands before her Maker now.

BRAND.

Dead !—But repentant ?

THE DOCTOR.

Scarcely so ;  
 She hugg'd Earth's goods with all her heart  
 Till the Hour struck, and they must part.

BRAND.

*[looking straight before him in deep  
 emotion].*

Is here an erring soul undone ?

THE DOCTOR.

She will be mildly judged, maybe ;—  
 And Law temper'd with equity.

H



## BRAND

BRAND

*[in a low tone].*

What said she ?

THE DOCTOR.

Low she mutter'd : He  
Is no hard dealer, like my son.

BRAND.

*[sinking in anguish upon the bench].*  
Guilt-wrung or dying, still that lie  
That every soul is ruin'd by !  
*[Hides his face in his hands.]*

THE DOCTOR

*[goes towards him, looks at him, and shakes  
his head].*

You seek, a day that is no more,  
In one and all things to restore.  
You think, God's venerable pact  
With man is still a living fact ;—  
Each Age in its own way will walk ;  
Ours is not scared by nurses' talk  
Of hell-bound soul and burning brand ;—  
Humanity 's OUR first command !

BRAND

*[looking up].*

Humanity !—That sluggard phrase  
Is the world's watchword nowadays.  
With this each bungler hides the fact  
That he dare not and will not act ;  
With this each weakling masks the lie,  
That he'll risk all for victory ;

With this each dastard dares to cloak  
 Vows faintly rued and lightly broke ;  
 Your puny spirits will turn Man  
 Himself Humanitarian !  
 Was God 'humane' when Jesus died ?  
 Had YOUR God then his counsel given,  
 Christ at the cross for grace had cried—  
 And the Redemption signified  
 A diplomatic note from Heaven !  
*[Hides his head, and sits in mute grief.]*

THE DOCTOR

*[softly].*

Rage, rage thy fill, thou soul storm-stress'd ;—  
 Best were it for thee to find tears.

AGNES

*[comes out on to the steps : pale and terrified  
 she whispers to the Doctor].*

In ! Follow me !

THE DOCTOR.

You raise my fears !

What is it, child ?

AGNES.

Into my breast  
 Creeps cold a serpent of affright—— !

THE DOCTOR.

What is it ?

AGNES

*[pulling him away].*

Come !—Great God of Might

*[They go into the house ; BRAND does not  
 notice.]*

BRAND.

*[to himself].*

Impenitent alive,—and dead !  
This is the finger of the Lord !  
Now through my means shall be restored  
The treasure she has forfeited ;  
Else tenfold woe upon my head !

*[Rises.]*

Henceforth as by my sonship bound,  
Unflinching, on my native ground  
I'll battle, a soldier of the Cross,  
For Spirit's gain by Body's loss !  
Me with His purging fire the Lord  
Hath arm'd, and with His riving Word :  
Mine is that Will and that strong Trust  
That crumbles mountains into dust !

THE DOCTOR

*[followed by AGNES comes hastily out,  
and cries].*

Order your house and haste away !

BRAND.

Were there an earthquake I would stay !

THE DOCTOR.

Then you have doom'd your child to death.

BRAND

*[wildly].*

The child ! Alf ! Alf ! What phantom wraith  
Of fear is this ! My child !

*[Is about to rush into the house.]*

THE DOCTOR  
[*holding him back*].

Stay, stay !—

Here summer sunshine pierces not,  
Here polar ice-blasts rive and rend,—  
Here dank and stifling mists descend.  
Another winter in this spot  
Will shrivel the tender life away.  
Go hence, you'll save him ! No delay !  
To-morrow's best.

BRAND.

To-night,—to-day !

Now, ere another hour is out !  
O yet he shall grow strong and stout ;—  
No blast from mountain or from shore  
Shall chill his baby-bosom more.  
Come, Agnes, lift him gently in sleep !  
Away along the winding deep !  
O Agnes, Agnes, death has spun  
His web about our little son !

AGNES.

Foreboding trembled in my heart,—  
And yet I only knew a part.

BRAND

[*to the DOCTOR*].

But flight will save him ? That is sure ?

THE DOCTOR.

The life a father day and night  
Watches, all perils can endure.

Be all to him ! and healthy, bright,  
You soon shall see him, be secure !

BRAND.

Thanks, thanks !

[To AGNES.]

In down enclose him well ;  
Chill sweeps the night-wind from the fell.

[AGNES goes in.]

[The DOCTOR silently watches BRAND, who  
gazes fixedly through the door ; then goes  
to him, and lays his hand on his shoulder.]

THE DOCTOR.

So tender to his own distress,  
And to the world so merciless !  
For them avails not MORE nor LESS !  
Only law's absolute NOUGHT or ALL,  
But now—no sooner sees he fall  
The dooming lot,—his valour's flown ;  
—The sacrificial lamb's his own !

BRAND.

What mean you ?

THE DOCTOR.

In the dying ear  
You thunder'd the decree of fear :  
To perish, unless All she gave,  
And went down naked to her grave !  
And that cry rang again, again,  
When need was direst among men !  
You're now the shipwreck't sailor, cleaving  
To swamp'd boat through the storms of doom,  
And from its upturn'd bottom heaving

To sea your tracts on Wrath to Come,  
 To sea, to sea, the bulky tome  
 That struck your Brothers' bosoms home ;  
 Now you ask only wind and wave  
 To waft your infant from death's reach.  
 Fly, only fly, by bay and beach,  
 Fly from your very mother's grave,—  
 Fly from the souls you 're sent to save ;—  
 'The Parson does not mean to preach !'

BRAND

*[wildly clutching his head as if to gather  
 his thoughts].*

Am I now blind ? Or was I ?

THE DOCTOR.

Nay,

A father has no other way ;  
 Don't fancy that your act I blame ;  
 I hold you greater, clipt and tame,  
 Than in your giant strength secure.—  
 Farewell ! I've held you up a glass ;  
 Use it and sigh : 'Alas, alas,  
 Is this a Titan's portraiture ?'

[Goes.]

BRAND

*[gazing a while before him : then bursts out].*

Before—or now,—when did I stray ?

[AGNES comes out with a cloak over her  
 shoulders and the child in her arms ;  
 BRAND does not see her ; she is about to  
 speak, but stands petrified with terror at  
 the look in his face. At the same moment  
 A MAN comes in hastily through the  
 garden-gate. The sun is setting.]

THE MAN.

Hark, priest, you have a foe !

BRAND

*[clenching his hand against his breast].*

Yes, HERE !

THE MAN.

Watch well the Mayor. The seed you sow  
Sprang ever bravely into ear,  
Till blighting slanders laid it low.  
With meaning hints he has implied  
That by-and-by this house would lack  
A tenant, and you 'd turn your back,  
The day your wealthy mother died.

BRAND.

And if it were so——

THE MAN.

Priest, I know you ;  
Know, why these poisonous tales are rife ;  
You stood against him still at strife ;  
He could not bend your purpose ;—lo, you,  
That's what these slanders signified——

BRAND

*[hesitating].*

Suppose the case—that he spoke true ?

THE MAN.

Then to us all you 've basely lied.

BRAND.

Have I—— ?

## THE MAN.

How oft you've told us, you,  
That God has call'd you to the strife,  
That here you've made your home for life,  
That HERE you'll bear the battle through,  
That none may shirk the call to serve,  
That all must fight and never swerve.  
YOU have the Call! How flames and flashes  
In many a heart the fire you've fed!

## BRAND.

This people's heart is hard and dead!  
Their ear is deaf, their fire is ashes!

## THE MAN.

O, you know better;—radiant day  
To many a heart has found its way.

## BRAND.

In tenfold others all is night.

## THE MAN.

You're sent to be their beacon-light!  
But be the numbers as you choose,  
Here is no need to closely scan;  
For here I stand, one only Man,  
And bid you: Leave us, if you can!  
I have a soul I would not lose,  
Like others; books I cannot use,  
You bore me from the depths below,—  
Try if you now can let me go!  
You cannot,—I so closely grip,  
My soul were lost if I should slip.



Farewell ; I look to learn at last :  
My priest by me—and God—stands fast !  
[*Goes.*]

AGNES  
[*timidly*].  
Your lips are blanch'd, and white your cheek ;  
You seem to utter an inward shriek !

BRAND.  
Each strong word flung at yonder rock  
Thrills back with tenfold echo's shock.

AGNES  
[*advancing a step*].  
I'm ready !

BRAND.  
Ready ? Whereunto ?

AGNES  
[*vehemently*].  
For what a mother needs must do !

GERD  
[*runs by outside and stops at the garden-gate ;  
claps her hands and cries in wild joy*].  
Have you heard ? The priest's flown off.—  
Up from hillocks, out of howes,  
Swarm the demons and the Drows,  
Black and ugly, big and little—  
Ugh, how fierce they cut and cuff— !  
Half my eye away they whittle ;  
Half my soul they've carried off ;  
With the stump I'll e'en make shift,  
It will serve me well enough !

BRAND.

Girl, your thoughts are all adrift ;  
See, I stand before you.

GERD.

You ?

Ay, but not the parson ! Swift  
From the peak my falcon flew,  
Fiercely down the fells he hied him,  
He was bitted and saddled too,  
Through the nightfall blast he hiss'd,  
And a man was set astride him,—  
'Twas the parson, 'twas the priest !  
Now the valley church is bare,  
Lock and bar are bolted there ;  
Ugly-church's day is past ;  
MINE shall get its due at last.  
There the priest stands, tall and strong,  
Snowy surplice swathes his flank,  
Woven of winter's drip and dank,—  
If you'd see him, come along ;  
Parish-church is bare and blank ;  
My priest has so brave a song,  
That the whole earth rings to hear it.

BRAND.

Who has bidden thee, shatter'd spirit,  
Lure me with this idol-lay ?

GERD

*[coming into the garden].*

Idols, idols ? What are they ?  
Oho ! That is what you mean :  
Giant or pigmy, large or lean,  
Always gilded, always gay.

Idols ! Look you where she stands !  
See you 'neath her mantle stray  
Baby-feet and baby-hands ?  
See you how those robes are gay,  
That close-folded something keep  
Like a little child asleep ?  
Back she shudders ! Hides her son !  
Idols ?—Man, I show you ONE !

AGNES.

Have you tears, Brand ? Can you pray ?  
Terror scorches mine away !

BRAND.

Woe's me, Agnes,—I forebode  
In her words the voice of God.

GERD.

Hark ; now all the bells are loud,  
Clanging down the savage fells !  
See, what moving masses crowd  
Upwards to those bidding bells !  
See the thousand trolls uprisen  
From the ocean-caves, their prison ;  
See the thousand dwarfs up-leaping  
From the graves, where they were sleeping  
With the priest's seal on them set :  
Grave and ocean cannot bind them,  
Out they're swarming, chill and wet ;—  
Troll-babes that but shammed to die,  
Grinning roll the rocks behind them :  
'Mother, father !' hark, they cry ;  
Goodman, Goodwife, make reply ;

Then, as fathers among sons,  
Move among their buried ones ;  
Women lay their risen dead  
At their bosoms to be fed,  
Strutted scarce with prouder front  
When they bore them to the font.  
Life begins ! The parson's fled !

BRAND.

Get thee from me ! Direr still  
Grows the vision——

GERD.

Hark, he's mocking !  
He that sits by yon way-border,  
Where it rears to scale the hill,  
All their names as they go flocking  
In his book he writes in order ;—  
Ho ! he's wellnigh all the pack ;  
For the parish-church is bare,  
Lock and bar are bolted there,—  
And parson's off on falcon-back !  
[*Leaps over the garden-fence and is lost  
in the moraine. Stillness.*]

AGNES

[*approaches, and says in a low voice.*]  
Late we linger : let us go.

BRAND

[*looking fixedly at her.*]  
Shall our way be——  
[*Points first to the garden-gate, then to the  
house-door.*]  
So ?—or so ?

## BRAND

AGNES

*[starts back shuddering].*

Brand, your child,—your child !

BRAND

*[following her].*

Say rather :

Was I priest ere I was father ?

AGNES

*[drawing further back].*Though in thunder-crash it peal'd,  
Unto that my lips are seal'd.

BRAND

*[following].*You are Mother : it is due  
That the last word come from you.

AGNES.

I am Wife : I shall fulfil  
All that you have heart to will.

BRAND

*[trying to grasp her arm].*

Take the Cup of Choice from me !

AGNES

*[retreating behind the tree].*

Mother then I should not be !

BRAND.

There a Judgment is let fall !

AGNES

*[vehemently].*

HAVE you any choice at all !

BRAND

Still the Judgment, gathering force !

AGNES.

Trust you wholly in God's Call ?

BRAND.

Yes !

*[grasps her hand firmly].*

And now 'tis yours to give

Final sentence : Die or live !

AGNES.

Go where God has fix'd your course !

*[Pause.]*

BRAND.

Late we linger : let us go.

AGNES

*[voiceless].*

Shall our way be—— ?

BRAND

*[silent].*

AGNES

*[pointing to the garden-gate].*

So ?

BRAND

*[pointing to the house-door].*

Nay,— so !

## AGNES

*[raising the child aloft in her arms].*

God ! The gift Thou canst require  
I can lift it to thy sight !  
Guide me through life's martyr-fire !

*[Goes in.]*

## BRAND

*[gazes a while before him, bursts into tears, clasps  
his hands over his head, throws himself down  
on the steps, and cries].*

Jesus, Jesus ! give me light !

## THE FOURTH ACT

[*Christmas Eve in the Manse. The room is dark. Garden-door in the background ; a window on one side, a door on the other. AGNES, in mourning, stands at the window and gazes out into the darkness.*]

AGNES.

Still he comes not ! Comes not yet !—  
Oh, how hard, with gloom beset,—  
Still to wait and still to cry,—  
Winning never a reply !—  
Fast they fall, the softly sifted  
Snowflakes ; in a shroud-like woof  
They have swathed the old church roof——

[*Listens.*]

Hark ! the garden-latch is lifted !  
Steps ! A man's step, firm and fast !

[*Hurries to the door and opens it.*]

Is it thou ? Come home ! At last !

[*BRAND comes in, snowy, in travelling dress, which he removes during what follows.*]



AGNES

*[throwing her arms about him].*

Oh, how long thou wast away !  
Go not from me, go not from me ;  
All alone I cannot sway  
The black clouds that overcome me ;  
What a night, what days have been  
These two—and the night between !

BRAND.

I am with thee, child, once more.

*[He lights a single candle, which throws  
a pale radiance over the room.]*

Thou art pale.

AGNES.

And worn and sad.

I have watch'd and long'd so sore ;  
And this little leafy bough—  
Little, it was all I had,  
Saved from summer until now  
To bedeck our Christmas-tree,—  
I have hung it there, Brand, see !  
His the bush was, so we said ;  
Ah, 'Twas his—it crown'd him dead !

*[Bursts into tears.]*

Look, from out the snow it peers  
Yonder, his—O God——

BRAND.

His grave.

AGNES.

O that word !

BRAND.

Have done with tears.

AGNES.

Yes—be patient—I'll be brave !  
But my soul is bleeding still,  
And the wound is raw and new—  
Sapp'd is all my strength of will.  
Oh, but better shall ensue !  
Once these days are overworn,  
Thou shalt never see me mourn !

BRAND.

Keep'st thou so God's holy Night ?

AGNES.

Ah ! Too much thou must not crave !  
Think—last year so sweet and bright,  
This year carried from my sight ;  
Carried—carried——

BRAND

[*loudly*].

To the grave !

AGNES

[*shrieks*].

Name it not !

BRAND.

With lungs that crack,  
Named it must be, if thou shrink—  
Named, till echo rolls it back,  
Like a billow from the brink,

AGNES.

Ah ! The word gives thee, too, pain.  
How-so passionless thou boast thee !  
On thy brow I see the stain  
Of the agony it cost thee !

BRAND.

On my brow the drops that lie  
Are but sea-spray from the storm.

AGNES.

And that dewdrop in thine eye,  
Has it fallen from the sky ?  
No, ah ! no, it is too warm,  
'Tis thy heart's dew !

BRAND.

Agnes, wife,

Let us bravely face the strife ;  
Stand together, never flinch,  
Struggle onward inch 'by inch.  
Oh, I felt a man out there !  
Surges o'er the reef were dashing ;  
Horror of the storm-lit air  
Still'd the sea-gull ; hail was thrashing  
Down upon the boiling sea.  
In my skiff, that mid-fjord quiver'd,  
Mast and tackle creak'd and shiver'd,  
Tatter'd sails blew far a-lee,  
Scarce a shred of them remaining,  
Every nail and stanchion straining !  
From the beetling summits sunder'd,  
Down the avalanches thunder'd ;

Stiff and stark, with corpse-like faces  
Sat the rowers in their places.  
Then the soul in me wax'd high ;  
From the helm I ruled them all,  
Knowing well that One thereby  
Had baptized me to His call !

## AGNES,

In the tempest to be strong,  
Eager in the stress of fight,  
That is easy, that is light ;  
Think of me, who, all day long,  
Still must croon without relief  
The low swallow-song of grief ;  
Think of me, who have no charm  
For the tedious pain of life ;  
Me, who, far from war's alarm,  
Lack the fiery joys of strife :  
Think, oh think, of me, who share not  
Noble work, but brood and wait ;  
Me, who to remember dare not,  
And who never can forget !

## BRAND.

Thou no noble life-work ! Thou !  
Never was it great as now.  
Listen, Agnes ; thou shalt know  
What to me our loss has brought.  
Oftentimes my light is low,  
Dim my reason, dull my thought,  
And there seems a kind of gladness  
In immeasurable sadness.

Agnes—in such hours I see  
God, as at no other, near ;  
Oh, so near, it seems to me  
I could speak, and He would hear.  
Like a lost child then I long  
To be folded to His breast,  
And be gather'd by His strong  
Tender Father-arms to rest !

AGNES.

Brand, oh see Him so alway !  
To thy supplication near—  
God of love and not of fear !

BRAND.

No ; I may not bar His way,  
Nor run counter to my Call ;  
I must see Him vast, sublime  
As the heavens,—a pigmy Time  
Needs a giant God withal !  
Oh, but THOU mayst see Him near,  
See Him as a Father dear,  
Bow thy head upon His breast,  
There, when thou art weary, rest,  
Then return, with face aglow  
From His presence, fair and free,  
Bear His glory down to me  
Worn with battle-thrust and throe !  
See, my Agnes ; so to share  
Is the soul of wedded life :  
His, the turmoil and the strife,  
Hers the healing and the care ;  
This and this alone, the true  
Wedlock, that makes one of two.

Since thou turnedst from the life  
Of the world to be my wife,  
Boldly cast thy lot with me,  
This the work appointed thee :  
Mine the stir and stress of fight,  
Battle in the burning sun,  
Watching in the winter night ;  
But for thee, when all is done,  
To my parching lips to hold  
Love's full wine-cup, and to fold  
'Neath the breastplate's iron stress  
The soft robe of tenderness.  
Surely that work is not light !

## AGNES.

Every work that I have sought  
Is too hard for my weak skill ;  
All the fibres of my will  
Gather round a single thought.  
Like a vision seems it still :  
Let me have of tears my fill.  
Help me so myself to see,—  
What I am, and ought to be !  
Brand,—last night, in stillest hush,  
Open'd he my chamber door,  
On his cheek a rosy flush,  
And his little shirt he wore,—  
Toddled so with childish tread  
To the couch where I lay lonely,  
'Mother !' call'd to me, and spread  
Both his arms, and smiled, but only  
As if praying : 'Make me warm.'  
Yea, I saw !—Oh, my heart bled——

BRAND

BRAND.

Agnes !

AGNES.

Ah, his little form  
Was a-cold, Brand ! Needs it must,  
Pillow'd in the chilly dust.

BRAND.

That which lies beneath the sod  
Is the CORSE ; the CHILD's with God.

AGNES

*[shrinking from him].*

Oh, canst thou without remorse  
Thus our bleeding anguish tear ?  
What thou sternly call'st the corse—  
Ah, to me, my child is THERE !  
Where is body, there is soul :  
These apart I cannot keep,  
Each is unto me the whole ;  
Alf beneath the snow asleep  
Is my very Alf in heaven !

BRAND.

Many a raw wound must be riven  
Ere thy deep disease give way.

AGNES.

Yet have patience with me, pray,  
Let me follow, not be driven.  
Give me thy strong hand and guide me !  
Oh, and gently, gently chide me !

Thou whose voice in thunder-tones  
Vibrates in the hour of strife,  
For the soul that still with groans  
Fights a fight for very life,  
Hast thou no soft, piteous lay,  
To beguile its pangs away ?  
Ne'er a message to uplift,  
Point me to the dawn-fired rift ?  
God, as thou wouldst have me view Him,  
Is a monarch on His throne.  
How dare I, then, turn unto Him  
With my lowly mother's moan ?

BRAND.

Wouldst thou rather, haply, turn  
To the God thou knew'st before ?

AGNES.

Never, never, nevermore !  
And yet oftentimes I yearn  
Towards the daybreak, towards the light,  
Towards the sunshine warm and golden.  
Oh, the ancient saw is right :  
'Lightly lifted, hardly holden.'  
All too vast this realm of thine,  
Too gigantic to be mine.  
Thou, thy word, thy work, thy goal,  
Will austere, and steadfast soul,  
Overhead the beetling height,  
And the barrier fjord below,  
Grief and memory, toil and night,  
All vast,—were the Church but so !



BRAND

[startled].

What ! the Church ? Again that thought ?  
Is it bred an instinct blind  
In the air ?

AGNES

[shaking her head sadly].

Oh ask me not  
To find reasons for my thought.  
Instinct steals upon the sense  
Like a perfume,—to and fro,  
Blowing whither ? Blowing whence ?  
I perceive it, that is all  
And, unknowing, yet I know  
That for me it is too small.

BRAND.

Truth may be from dreams divined.  
In a hundred hearts I find  
Self-begotten this one word ;  
Even in hers, whose frantic call  
From the mountain-side I heard :  
' It is ugly, for 'tis small !'  
So she said ; and like the rest,  
Left her meaning half-express'd.  
Then of women came a score,  
' Yes, it is too small,' they cried ;  
They would have it spread and soar,  
Like a palace in its pride.  
Agnes—ah ! I see it clear ;

Thou the woman art whom God  
Gave me for His angel-guide,  
Safe alike from doubt and fear  
Through the darkness thou hast trod,  
Keeping still the even way,  
Where I blindly went astray.  
Thee no glamour captivated—  
Once thy finger show'd the fated  
Region where my life-work waited,  
Check'd me, as I sought sublime,  
To the vault of heaven to climb,  
Turn'd my soaring glance within,  
And that kingdom bade me win.  
Now, a second time, thy word  
Penetrates my soul like day,  
Guides me where I vainly err'd,  
Glorifies my weary way.  
Small the Church is? Be it so :  
Then a greater Church shall grow.  
Never, never did I wot  
All God gave me, giving thee ;  
Now that cry of thine's for me :  
Leave me not ! Oh leave me not !

## AGNES.

All my sorrow I will quell,  
I will dry the tears that well,  
Seal in still sepulchral sleep  
Memory's lone castle-keep ;  
Lay oblivion like a sea  
Open between it and me,  
I will blot the joyous gleams  
From my little world of dreams,  
Live, thy wife, alone for thee !

## BRAND

BRAND.

Steep the path is, high the goal.

AGNES.

Lead, nor sternly spur, my soul !

BRAND.

In a greater name I call.

AGNES.

One of whom thou saidst that still  
He accepts the steadfast will,  
Though the flesh be weak withal !

[*Going.*]

BRAND.

Whither, Agnes ?

AGNES

[*smiles*].

Ah, to-day

Home must have its feast-array !  
Thou my lavishness didst chide,  
Mindest thou, last Christmastide ?  
All the chamber flash'd with lights,  
From the Christmas-tree there hung  
Toys and wreaths and quaint delights ;  
There was laughter, there was song.  
Brand, for us this year also  
Shall the Christmas-candles glow,  
Here shall all be deck'd and dight  
For the great, still Feast to-night !

Here, if haply God should peep,  
He of meek and lowly mind  
Shall His stricken children find,  
Babes, that humbly understand,  
To have felt their Father's hand  
Gives them not a right to weep.—  
Seest thou now of tears a sign ?

BRAND

*[presses her to him a moment].*

Child, make light : that work is thine.

• AGNES

*[smiles sadly].*

Thou thy greater Church shalt rear :  
Oh—but end ere Spring is here !

*[Goes.]*

BRAND.

Willing in her torments still,  
Willing at the martyr's stake ;  
Flesh may flag and spirit break,  
But unbroken is her Will.  
Lord, to her poor strength add Thine ;—  
Be the cruel task not mine  
At Thy bidding to unchain  
Angry vultures of the Law,  
Swift to swoop with ravening maw  
And her heart's warm blood to drain !  
I have strength to stand the strain.  
Twofold agony let me bear,—  
But be merciful to her !

*[A knock at the outer door. The MAYOR enters.]*

THE MAYOR.

A beaten man, I seek your door.

BRAND.

A beaten man ?

THE MAYOR.

As such I stand  
Before you. When I open'd war,  
And sought to drive you from the land,  
The end I augur'd, I confess,  
For you, was not just—well—success.

BRAND.

Indeed—— ?

THE MAYOR.

But though my cause I boast  
The better, I'll contend no more.

BRAND.

And why ?

THE MAYOR.

Because you have the most.

BRAND.

Have I ?

THE MAYOR.

Oh, that you can't ignore :  
Folks flock to you by sea and shore ;  
And in the whole of my confine  
A spirit has of late been rife,  
Which, God's my witness, is not mine ;  
Whence to conclude is only due,  
That it originates with you.  
Here is my hand : we'll end our strife !

BRAND.

War such as we wage does not cease,  
Howe'er the vanquish'd cry 'No more !'

THE MAYOR.

Why, what should be the end of war  
But reasonable terms of peace ?  
To kick at pricks is not my way,  
I'm made of common human clay ;  
When at your breast the lance you feel  
It is but reason to give place ;—  
With but a switch to parry steel,  
'Tis just to make a volte-face ;  
Left of your cause the sole defender,  
It is the wisest to surrender.

BRAND.

Two things are noticeable here.  
First, that you call me strong. Of men  
I have the larger part.

THE MAYOR.

That's clear.

BRAND.

Now, possibly : but when shall rise  
The great dread day of sacrifice,  
Who will have more supporters THEN ?

THE MAYOR.

Of sacrifice ? Why, goodness me,  
That's just the day we never see !  
At least, the sacrifice no worse is  
Than drafts upon good people's purses ;

The age is too humane to bring  
Any more costly offering.  
And what's most vexing is, that I  
Myself have all along been noted  
Of those who the Humane promoted  
And hinder'd sacrifice thereby.  
So that it may be fairly said,  
I've put the axe to my own head,  
Or, at the least, laid rods in store  
To baffle all I've struggled for.

## BRAND.

You may be right. But, furthermore,  
I hardly know how you can dare  
Surrender your own cause as lost.  
Be rods, or be they not, the cost,  
Man's work is what he's fashion'd for,  
And Paradise, for him, lies THERE.  
'Twixt him and it though oceans swell,  
And close at hand lie Satan's quarter,  
May he for that cry 'Toil, farewell—  
The way to hell's distinctly shorter !' ?

## THE MAYOR.

To that I answer : Yes and No.  
Some final haven man must win ;—  
If all our toil brings nothing in,  
Who on a barren quest will go ?  
The fact stands thus : we want reward  
For every labour, light or hard ;  
And if in arms we miss the prize,—  
We gain our point by compromise.

BRAND.

But BLACK will never turn to WHITE !

THE MAYOR.

Respected friend, the gain is slight  
Of saying : ' White as yonder brae,'  
When the mob's shouting : ' Black as snow !

BRAND.

You join them, possibly ?

THE MAYOR.

Why, no—

I rather shout, not black, but GRAY.  
The time's humane ; asks apt compliance,  
Not blunt and absolute defiance.  
We stand on democratic ground,  
Where what the people thinks is right ;  
Shall ONE against the mass propound  
His special views on black and white ?  
In short, you, having a majority,  
Are best entitled to authority.  
So I submit, as they submitted,  
With you my humble lot I cast,  
And may I by no soul be twitted  
For not contending to the last !  
Folks now consider, I perceive,  
Petty and poor all I achieve ;  
They say there's something of more worth  
Than richer harvests wrung from earth ;  
They are not willing as they were,  
The necessary mite to spare ;  
And the best cause, if will's not in it,—  
There's very little hope to win it.

K



Believe me, 'tis no easy thing  
To drop one's plans for roads and bridges,  
For tapping meres and draining ridges,  
And more besides that was in swing.  
But, good Lord, what's a man to say ?  
If he can't win, he must give way ;  
Patiently trust that Time 's his friend,  
And to the blast astutely bend.  
Now,—the folks' favour I've foregone  
In just the way it first was won ;  
Ay, ay,—and by another track  
I'll get my old possession back.

## BRAND.

So all your cunning, all your art,  
Aim'd but to win the people's heart ?

## THE MAYOR.

God help me, no ! The common good  
And profit of this neighbourhood  
Has been my single, sole desire.  
But, I admit, there did conspire  
The worker's hope of worthy hire  
For day's work honestly pursued.  
The fact stands thus : a resolute  
And able man, with sense to boot,  
Demands to see his labour's fruit,  
And not to drudge and sweat and groan  
To profit an Idea alone.  
With the best will I can't afford  
To throw my interests overboard,  
And give my brains without reward.

I've a large household to supply,  
A wife, and of grown girls a store,  
Who must be first provided for ;—  
Belly that's empty, throat that's dry,  
The IDEA scarce will satisfy,  
Where mouths so many must be fill'd.  
And any man who should demur,  
For him I have but one reply,—  
He's an unworthy householder.

BRAND.

And now your object is—?

THE MAYOR.

To build.

BRAND.

TO BUILD?

THE MAYOR.

Why, yes,—the common state

To better, and my own to boot.  
First I will build up the repute  
I stood in till a recent date :—  
The elections soon will be on foot :—  
So I must set some scheme afloat,  
Some booming enterprise promote ;  
Thus I regain my lost authority,  
And check the wane of my majority.  
Now, I've reflected, to compete  
With wind and tide wins no man's praises ;  
The folk want 'lifiting,' as the phrase is,  
A work for which I'm all unmeet ;  
I can but set them on their feet ;  
Which can't be done unless they please,—  
And here all are my enemies !

Whence I've resolved since such the case is,  
After ripe thought, to find a basis  
For making war with poverty.

BRAND.

You would uproot it?

THE MAYOR.

No, not I!

It is a necessary ill  
In every state : we must endure it ;  
Yet may we, with a little skill,  
In certain forms confine, secure it,  
If only we begin in time.  
He who would grow a bed of crime,  
Let him with poverty manure it :  
I'LL set a dam to this manure !

BRAND.

How ?

THE MAYOR.

Do you take me ? I can cure  
A want, of long and bitter proof,  
By building, for the Town's behoof,  
A Pest-house for the afflicted Poor.  
Pest-house I call a thing projected  
To rid us of the crime-infected.  
And, I reflected, to the Pest-house  
Might well be added an Arrest-house,  
The cause with its effect confined  
The selfsame bars and bolts behind,  
And nothing but a wall between.  
And, while my hand is in, I mean

In the same block to build withal  
A wing for balls and ballotings,  
Social and business gatherings,  
With platform and Assembly-Hall ;  
In short, a half-political,  
Half-social, smart and festive Guest-house.

## BRAND.

Sorely required ; this most of all ;  
But yet there's ONE thing needed more.

## THE MAYOR.

You mean a Mad-house ? Yes, indeed ;  
A very peremptory need ;  
That was my own idea before.  
But now, by friendly counsel wrought,  
I've utterly renounced the thought ;  
For who's to furnish the supplies  
For such a giant enterprise ?  
To put a Mad-house up would come,  
Believe me, to a pretty sum,  
If all whom need and merit fitted,  
Should be within its walls admitted.  
We must not build for our caprice,  
But note Time's current as it glides ;—  
The world moves on with giant strides,  
Last year abundance, famine this ;  
You see to what a monstrous girth  
The folks' necessities have swell'd,  
Talents for everything on earth,  
Headlong by seven-league boots propell'd,  
Are swarming madly to the birth.

Thus it would be too dear a jest  
To build posterity a nest  
And let self, wife, and children go ;  
This tooth, I say, we can't afford :  
Out with it therefore, by the Lord !

BRAND.

And then, there's the great Hall, you know,  
For any madder than the rest.

THE MAYOR

[*delighted*].

Yes, it would mostly be to spare !  
Why, Brand, you've hit the nail-head there !  
If fortunate our project's fate is,  
We get to boot—a Mad-house gratis ;  
Here, shelter'd by the selfsame roof,  
And by the selfsame flag defended,  
All the essential strands are blended  
That tinge and tone our social woof.  
Here in one haven disembogues  
The flood of Paupers and of Rogues ;  
With Lunatics who roam'd at large,  
Subject to no man's check or charge ;  
Here too our Freedom's highest reach,  
The election-strife, the storm of speech ;  
And here our Council-Hall, for framing  
Measures to meet each public pest ;  
And here our Feast-Hall, for proclaiming  
How well we'll guard the Past's bequest.  
You see, then, if our Project stand,  
The Cragman has at his command  
All he in reason can demand,—  
The right to live as he thinks best.

God knows, how slender our resources,  
But once our enterprise in force is,  
I trust we may be with impunity  
Styled a well-organised community.

BRAND.

But then the means—?

THE MAYOR.

Ay, there's the knot,  
As in all other things, in this.  
Hardly to contributions wrought  
Is Will, and if your help I miss,  
I furl my flag without a thought :  
But with your eloquent alliance  
I'll bid all obstacles defiance,  
And when all's done, your kind compliance,  
Believe me, shall not be forgot.

BRAND.

In short, you'd BUY me.

THE MAYOR.

For my aim  
I should prefer another name :  
I seek, with general good in view,  
That gulf of difference to cross  
Which you from me and me from you  
Has sever'd, to our common loss.

BRAND.

In an ill-omen'd hour you came——

THE MAYOR.

Unfortunately yes, I own it :  
Your recent loss,—I might have known it,

But your brave bearing re-assured me,  
And need of public credit lured me.

BRAND.

In grievous or in gladsome season  
I render help where need is plain ;  
But, for another weighty reason,  
This time your mission is in vain.

THE MAYOR.

And which, pray— ?

BRAND.

*I am building too.*

THE MAYOR.

You building ? You adopt my view ?

BRAND.

Not altogether.

*[Pointing out of the window.]*

Do you see ?

THE MAYOR.

Yonder ?

BRAND.

Yes.

THE MAYOR.

That great ugly stall ? —

Why, that's the Parsonage granary.

BRAND.

No, not that ;—but the ugly, small—

THE MAYOR.

The Church ?

BRAND.

I mean to build it GREAT.

THE MAYOR.

That, by the devil ! you shall not !  
No man shall alter it one jot !  
My plan 'twould utterly frustrate.  
Mine 's urgent, only waits the word,  
By yours I 'm absolutely floor'd ;  
Two weapons can't at once be wielded,  
Yield therefore— !

BRAND.

I have never yielded.

THE MAYOR.

You must, man, here. Build my Arrest-house,  
My Pest-house and my festive Guest-house,  
Build all, the Mad-house comprehending,  
And who 'll ask, where the Church wants mending ?  
And why condemn it now to fall ?  
'Twas well enough a while ago.

BRAND.

Possibly ; now it is too small.

THE MAYOR.

I never saw it full, I know.

BRAND.

Even a single soul is scanted,  
And has not room therein to soar.



## THE MAYOR

[*shaking his head in amazement*].

(Which single soul but proves the more  
How sorely my Asylum's wanted.)

[*Changing his tone.*]

Let the Church be, is my advice.  
One may regard it, in some wise,  
As a rich heirloom of our age ;  
In fact, a noble heritage,  
Which we not lightly may remove.  
Nay, if my building project crashes,  
I, like a Phoenix from the ashes,  
Will live again in public love,  
As one chivalrously intent  
To save our ancient monument !  
Here stood a heathen fane of old,—  
'Twas in King Belë's reign, no doubt ;  
Then, later heroes more devout  
Founded the Church with looted gold.  
All-sacred in its antique dress,  
Grand in its simple stateliness,  
Till our own days it tower'd sublime——

## BRAND.

But all these glories of old time  
Lie long since buried deep in mould,  
Of all surviving sign bereft.

## THE MAYOR.

Just so ! They are so very old  
That not a trace of them is left.  
But in my late grandfather's day  
A wall-hole still defied decay !

BRAND.

A wall-hole ?

THE MAYOR.

Fit to hold a tun !

BRAND.

But the wall's self ?

THE MAYOR.

Oh, that was gone.

In plain terms then, I am compell'd  
To say, your scheme is out of court :—  
A barbarous and unparallel'd  
Horrible sacrilege, in short.  
And then the money,—do you dream  
These folks are so profuse in spending,  
That they'll contrive new cost by lending  
Existence to a half-hatch'd scheme ?  
When with a little deftness they  
May so far patch the crumbling wall  
That in our time it will not fall ?  
But just go out !—the field survey,—  
You'll find, I'm winner after all.

BRAND.

From no man will I wring a jot  
To give my God house-harbourage :  
With my own goods it shall be wrought ;  
In that one work my heritage  
To the last penny shall be spent.—  
Now, Mayor, are you still confident  
That you can shake me from my thought ?

THE MAYOR

*[with folded hands].*

I stand—as from the clouds dropp'd down !  
 Such things are even in a Town  
 Scarce heard of,—and yet here, for us,  
 Who long to the necessitous  
 Have closed our purses and our doors,  
 You loose this flood of gifts unbounded  
 That ripples, flashes, foams and pours—  
 —No, Brand, I'm utterly dumbfounded !

BRAND.

In thought I long ago resign'd  
 My wealth——

THE MAYOR.

Yes, whisper'd hints have flown  
 Pointing to something of the kind.  
 But I regarded them as wind.  
 How many men give all they own  
 Without a tangible return ?  
 However, that's your own concern.—  
 Go on ! I'll follow. You're in feather,  
 You can act freely, work and sway.—  
 Brand, we will build the Church TOGETHER !

BRAND.

What, you are willing to give way ?

THE MAYOR.

Dear God's my witness, that I am !  
 And shall be while my wits are sound !  
 When ONE would fatten, pamper, cram,—  
 Another milk and shear and flay,—  
 Where, think you, will the flock be found ?

Death and destruction, I'm your man !  
I'm fire and fury for the plan !  
Thrill'd, agitated, nay, affected !  
Providence prompted the design  
That led me to your door to-night,  
For sure, without the hint of MINE,  
YOUR plan had scarcely been projected,  
Or, at the least, scarce seen the light !  
And thus the Church, conceived aright,  
Will by MY means have been erected !

BRAND.

But, don't forget, we must lay low  
That towering relic of the past !

THE MAYOR

[*looking out*].

Seen in the twofold glimmer cast  
By the new moon and the fresh snow,  
It seems a sort of—rubbish-heap.

BRAND.

What, Mayor !

THE MAYOR.

It is too old to keep !

I fail entirely to explain it,  
Till now it never struck my eye,—  
The weathercock stands all awry ;  
It would be monstrous to retain it.  
And where are architecture, style,  
Rightly regarded, in the pile ?  
What terms can give that arch its due ?  
An architect would call it VILE ;—  
And really I must share his view.

And then that roof with moss-tufts blowing,—  
Bless me, they're none of Belē's growing.  
No, we may overmuch assert  
The reverence for ancient glories !  
One fact, at least, there's no o'erthrowing,  
That this old rotten hut no more is  
But just a very heap of dirt !

BRAND.

But if the people's voice should storm  
At those who seek to lay it low—?

THE MAYOR.

I will it though they all cry No.  
This Christmas with the least delay  
I'll put the thing in proper form,  
And launch it smoothly on its way.  
I'll write, I'll agitate, I'll sway !  
Ay, ay—you know the stuff I'm made of !  
And if I cannot hire or hound  
The foolish flock to help to end it,  
With my own hands I'll rive and rend it,  
Timber by timber, to the ground.  
Nay, though I had to call the aid of  
My wife and all my girls as well,  
Down it should come, by death and hell !

BRAND.

This language has another sound  
Than that which earlier from you fell.

THE MAYOR.

To be humane is to repress  
All manner of ONE-SIDEDNESS.

And sure, if truth the poet utters,  
Precisely what is to be sought  
In thinking is 'the winged thought,'—  
That is to say—the thought that flutters.  
Farewell.

[*Taking his hat.*]

I have to see the band.

BRAND.

The what?

THE MAYOR.

Just think, within our land

This morning two of us laid hand  
On a foul-favour'd gipsy-horde,  
So I got help with rope and cord,  
And now they're in your neighbour's ward  
Next to the North, but—devil clip me!—  
If just a couple didn't slip me——

BRAND.

The bells are ringing : Peace to Men.

THE MAYOR.

Why came this hell-brood hither, then?  
Yet in a sense, they are, 'tis true,  
Kin to this parish,—

[*Laughing.*]

Nay to YOU.

Hark to a riddle ; read it right,  
If you have power and appetite.  
There be, who in effect derive  
From her, by whom you are alive,  
But owe their actual origin  
To coming of another kin.

## BRAND

BRAND

*[shaking his head].*

O God, so many riddles rise  
Before our baffled, helpless eyes !

THE MAYOR.

But this one's very lightly guess'd.  
You must have often, heretofore,  
Heard tell one story or another  
Of that poor fellow here by West  
Whose head four parsons' learning bore ;  
He went a-wooing to your Mother.

BRAND.

What then ?

THE MAYOR.

Conceive,—a girl of gold !  
She sent him to the right-about  
Promptly, as might have been foretold.  
And how d'ye think he took the flout ?  
Half mad with grief he wander'd out,  
Mated at last another bride,  
A gipsy,—and, before he died,  
Enrich'd with issue this foul band  
That sins and starves about the land.  
Nay, on this parish he conferr'd  
One bastard imp—as souvenir  
Of his illustrious career.

BRAND.

Namely—?

THE MAYOR.

The gipsy-urchin Gerd.

BRAND

*[in muffled tones].*

Ah—so !

THE MAYOR

*[gaily].*

Confess, the riddle's good !

His issue in effect derive  
From her by whom you are alive ;  
For the first cause of all the brood  
Was, that he loved and she withstood.

BRAND.

Advise me, Mayor ; can you tell  
Some means of giving them relief ?

THE MAYOR.

Tut, clap them in a Bridewell cell.  
They're overhead in debt to hell ;  
To save them were to play the thief  
With Satan, who will lose his trade  
If earth restore not what he made.

BRAND.

You plann'd to build a house, to better  
This naked misery and dearth——

THE MAYOR.

That plan was, by its own begetter,  
Slain in the moment of its birth.

BRAND.

If after all though—it were well——

L



THE MAYOR

*[smiling].*

This language has another sound  
Than that which earlier from you fell.

*[Clapping him on the shoulder.]*

What's buried, leave it in the ground !  
Man must not dash his deed with doubt.  
Farewell, farewell, I can't remain,  
I must be off and scour the fell,  
To seek this nest of truants out.  
A merry Yule ! We'll meet again !  
My greetings to your wife. Farewell !

*[Goes.]*

BRAND

*[after a meditative silence].*

O expiation without end !—  
So wildly mingle, strangely blend  
The threads that human fortune spin,—  
Sin tangled with the fruit of sin,  
Pouring its own pollution in,—  
That he who eyes their mazy flight  
Sees foulest Wrong grow one with Right.

*[Goes to the window, and after a long look out.]*

My little child, lamb without stain,  
Thou for my mother's deed wast slain ;  
A shatter'd spirit bore His voice  
Whose throne the crested heavens sustain,  
And bade me cast the die of choice.  
And this distracted soul had birth  
Because my mother's clave to earth.

Thus the Lord, sowing fruit of crime,  
Reaps retribution in His time,  
And, reaching down from His high dome,  
Strikes the third generation home.

[*Starts back in horror from the window.*]

Yes, God is above all things just,  
And retribution is His goal ;  
Only by sacrifice the soul  
Achieves redemption from the dust ;  
Hard truth, our age appall'd describes,  
And, therefore, stubbornly denies.

[*Walks up and down the room.*]

To pray ? Ah, pray—a word that slips  
Easily over all men's lips ;  
A coin by all men lightly paid.  
What's prayer ? In storm and stress to shout  
Unto the vague Unknown for aid,  
Upon Christ's shoulders beg a place,  
And stretch both hands to Heaven for grace—  
While knee-deep in the slough of doubt.  
Ha ! if there needed nothing more  
I might like others dare to raise  
My hand and batter at His door  
Who still is 'terrible in praise.'—

[*Pauses and reflects.*]

And yet in uttermost despair,  
In shuddering sorrow's deepest deep,  
When Alf at last had sunk to sleep,  
And all his mother's kisses vain  
Won not the lost smile back again—  
What felt I—if it was not prayer ?  
Whence came that trance, that ecstasy,

That rushing music, like a blast,  
That sang afar and hurried past,  
Bore me aloft and set me free ?  
Was it the ecstasy of prayer ?  
Did I with God hold converse there ?  
My anguish—did it reach His ears ?  
Did He look down and see my tears ?  
I know not. Barr'd is now the door,  
The darkness deeper than before,  
And nowhere, nowhere any light !  
Yes, She—who, darkling, yet hath sight

[*Calls in anguish.*]

Light, Agnes—light, if light thou hast !

[*AGNES opens the door and enters with the lighted  
Christmas candles ; a bright glow falls over  
the room.*]

BRAND.

Light !

AGNES.

See, the Yule light, Brand, at last !

BRAND

[*softly*].

The Yule light ! Ha !

AGNES

[*putting them on the table*].

Have I been slow ?

BRAND.

No, no.

AGNES.

Thou must be cold, Brand !

BRAND

[*loud*].

No !

AGNES

[*smiling, fills the stove*].

How stern ! It is thy pride of will,  
That scorns the darkness and the chill.

BRAND

[*walking up and down*].

H'm, Will !

AGNES

[*to herself as she decks the room*].

Here must the candles stand.

Last year he stretch'd his tiny hand  
After the glancing, dancing light :  
He was so joyous and so bright ;  
He started from his little chair,  
And ask'd me if a sun it were.

[*Moves the candles a little.*]

See ! now the candle's glow falls—THERE !  
Now from his bed my boy can see  
The window gleaming cheerily ;  
Now can he peer out of the gloom  
Silently into our lit room—  
But, ah ! the glass is dim ; stay, stay—  
I'll wipe that dew of tears away  
And make it smile—

[*Dries the pane.*]

BRAND

[*softly as he watches her*].

When in this breast

Will the wild waters sink to rest ?  
To rest they MUST !

## BRAND

AGNES

[*to herself*].

How bright the glow !  
It seems as though the sundering wall  
Had sunk ; the low room grown a hall,  
The murky world of ice and snow  
Sudden become a shelter'd nest,  
Where cosily my child may rest.

BRAND.

What dost thou, Agnes ?

AGNES.

Peace, I pray !

BRAND

[*nearer*].

Why didst thou ope the curtain ?

AGNES.

Nay,

I dreamt, and knew not what I did !

BRAND.

Snares in that dream of thine lie hid ;  
Close it again.

AGNES

[*pleading*].

Brand !

BRAND.

Close, I say !

AGNES.

Oh, be not harsh, it is not right.

BRAND.

Close, close !

AGNES

*[drawing it].*

Now all is close and tight ;

Yet in my heart I scarce can deem  
God injured if, at sorest need,  
In the brief respite of a dream  
I tasted comfort.

BRAND.

No, indeed !

He is a feeling Judge and kind,  
And will indulgently forbear,  
If in thy service He should find  
Some idol-worship here and there.

AGNES

*[bursts into tears].*

Oh, say, WHEN will He cease to crave ?  
My wings are weak—I faint and fall——

BRAND.

He gives to the devouring wave  
Who in his giving gives not ALL.

AGNES.

I HAVE given all ; I have no more !

BRAND

*[shakes his head].*

Yet other gifts remain behind.

AGNES

[*smiling*].

Ask : I've the courage of the poor !

BRAND.

Give !

AGNES.

Take ! Ah, Brand, thou'lt nothing find !

BRAND.

Thy memories and thy moans thou hast,  
Thy longings and thy sinful sighs——

AGNES

[*despairingly*].

I have my heart of agonies !

Tear, tear it from me !

BRAND.

Thou hast cast  
Thy offerings in the yawning deep  
For nothing, if thou count them losses.

AGNES

[*shudders*].

Narrow is thy Lord's way, and steep.

BRAND.

That way WILL cannot choose but keep.

AGNES.

And Mercy's is——

BRAND

[*peremptorily*].

Beset with crosses.

AGNES

*[gazes before her ; then, trembling].*

Now manifest and open lies,  
Abysmal as the depths of space,  
That mystic Word.

BRAND.

What Word ?

AGNES.

HE DIES

WHO SEES JEHOVAH FACE TO FACE.

BRAND

*[throws his arms about her and clasps  
her close].*

O look not on Him ! Close thine eyes !  
Hide thee, O hide thee !

AGNES.

Must I ?

BRAND

*[lets her go].*

No !

AGNES.

Thou sufferest, Brand.

BRAND.

Thou art so dear.

AGNES.

Thou lov'st me, but thy love I fear.  
'Tis stern.

BRAND.

Too stern ?



AGNES.

Ask not ; whereso

Thou goest, I will also go !

BRAND.

Think'st thou without design I won thee  
Out of thy gladsome gay content,  
Or, half in earnest, laid upon thee  
The call to self-abandonment ?  
Woe to us both ; too dear we paid,  
Too vast a sacrifice we made ;  
Thou art my wife : I crave thee ALL  
To live according to our call.

AGNES.

Crave ; only leave me not.

BRAND.

Indeed

I must ; for rest and peace I need.  
Soon shall the great new Church arise !

AGNES.

My little Church a ruin lies.

BRAND.

It was a blessed wind that blew  
And thy heart's idol overthrew !

*[Clasps her as if in dread.]*

Peace be upon thee—and, through thee,  
Peace also upon mine and me !

*[Goes towards the side-door.]*

AGNES.

Brand, may I softly set ajar  
One hateful window-barrier,—so ?  
Only a little ? May I ?

BRAND

*[in the doorway].*

No.

*[Goes into his room.]*

AGNES

Closed, all closed with bolt and bar !  
Seals on every passion set !  
Seal'd to sorrow and to sigh,  
Seal'd the grave and seal'd the sky,  
Seal'd to feel—and to forget !  
I will out ! I gasp for breath  
In this lonely house of death.  
Out ? Oh, whither ? Angry eyes  
Glare upon me from the skies !  
Can I, flying, high or low,  
Bear my treasure where I go ?  
Can I from my breast unsphere  
The mute vacancy of fear ?—

*[Listens at BRAND's door.]*

Loud he reads ; he cannot hear.  
There's no comfort ! There's no way !  
God is busy ; lists to-day  
But to song and praise and blessing  
Of the happy, child-possessing,  
Richly-gifted of the earth.  
Christmas is the feast of mirth.  
Me He sees not, nor takes heed  
Of a lonely mother's need.—

*[Goes cautiously to the window.]*

Shall I draw the curtain back,  
Till the clear and kindly ray

Chase the horror of night away  
From his chamber bare and black ?  
Nay, he is not there at all.  
Yule's the children's festival,  
He hath got him leave to rise,  
Haply now he stands, and cries,  
Stretches little arms in vain  
To his mother's darken'd pane.  
Was not that a baby's voice ?  
Alf, I've neither will nor choice !  
All is barr'd and bolted here.  
'Tis thy father's bidding, dear !  
Alf, I may not open now !  
An obedient child art thou !  
We ne'er grieved him, thou and I.  
Oh, fly home then to the sky,  
There is gladness, there is light,  
There thy merry comrades stay  
Till thou come to join their play.  
Oh, but weep not in their sight,  
Nor to any soul betray  
That thy father bade me lock,  
When thy little hand did knock.  
Years bring sterner, sadder stress  
Than a little child may guess.  
Say, he sorrow'd, say, he sigh'd ;  
Say, he wove the garden's pride  
All into a wreath for thee.  
'Tis his doing ! Canst thou see ?

*[Listens, starts, and shakes her head.]*

Oh, I dream ! Not bar and wall  
Only from my love divide me.

When the purging fire hath tried me  
In its anguish, then alone  
Shall the parting barriers fall  
And the mighty bolts be batter'd,  
And the vaulted dungeons shatter'd,  
And the prison hinges groan !  
Much, oh, much is to be done  
Ere we parted twain be one.  
I with silent, toiling hands  
Still will labour on, to fill  
The abyss of his commands ;  
I shall nerve me, I shall will.  
But it is the Feast this eve—  
Last year's how unlike ! And wait !  
We will honour it in state.  
I will fetch my treasures forth,  
Whereof the uncounted worth  
Best a mother can conceive,  
To whose spirit they express  
All her life-lost happiness.

*[She kneels down by the cupboard, and takes various things out of a drawer. At the same moment, BRAND opens the door, and is about to speak, when he observes her occupation, checks himself and remains standing. AGNES does not see him.]*

BRAND

*[softly].*

Haunting still the mortal mound,  
Playing in Death's garden-ground.

AGNES.

Lo, the robe, the veil that clad  
At the font my little lad.  
Under it his cloak I've laid—  
[*Holds it up, gazes at it, and laughs.*]  
Lord, how brave it looks and bright !  
Ah, he was a bonny sight  
In his festal robes array'd !  
Here's the scarf, the cape he wore  
When the keen wind first he bore ;  
Longer was it than was meet  
Then, but quickly grew too spare—  
I will lay it with them there.  
Gloves and stockings—(Oh, what feet !)  
And his hood of silken fold  
That had fenced him from the cold,  
All unused and clean and sweet.  
Oh, and there the wrappings warm  
That should shield his little form  
For the journey, from the storm ;  
When again I laid them by,  
Weary unto death was I !

BRAND

[*clasps his hands in anguish.*]  
Mercy, God ! I strive in vain !  
Shatter her last idol-shrine  
By some other hand than mine !

AGNES.

Did I weep ? Behold, a stain !  
Oh, my treasure ! Jewell'd prize,  
Bathed in floods from aching eyes,

Lit with fires of tortured Will,  
Holy Crowning-vesture, worn  
By a child to Death's font borne,  
Oh, what riches have I still !

*[A sharp knock at the outer door ; AGNES  
turns with a cry, and at the same moment  
sees BRAND. The door is burst open, and  
a WOMAN, raggedly dressed, enters hastily,  
with a child in her arms.]*

THE WOMAN

*[looking at the child's clothes, calls  
to AGNES].*

Thou rich mother, share with me !

AGNES.

Thou art richer far !

THE WOMAN.

I see,

Thou art of the common breed,  
Cramm'd with words, and void of deed.

BRAND

*[approaching her].*

Tell me what thou seekest.

THE WOMAN.

THEE,

Troth, I do not seek, at least !  
Rather to the wind and rain  
Will I hurry out again,  
Than be sermon'd by a priest ;  
Rather to the wild sea fly,  
Drown and rot beneath the sky,

Than I'll hear the black man tell  
How I'm on the way to hell ;  
Can I help—the devil take me—  
Being what God chose to make me ?

BRAND

[*to himself*].

Voice and feature pierce me still  
With a dim and icy dread.

AGNES.

Thou shalt warm thee, if thou'rt chill ;  
And thy hungry child be fed.

THE WOMAN.

Where there's warmth and where there's light,  
Brats of gipsies may not stay ;  
We must haunt the lone highway,  
Hill and forest, heath and height ;  
We must wander, we must roam,  
Leave to others house and home.  
I must swiftly from this place.  
Dogs of justice are behind me,  
Mayor, bailiff, all in chase,  
Hungering to catch and bind me !

BRAND.

Here thou shalt have shelter.

THE WOMAN.

Here !

Roof'd above and wall'd about ?  
No ! The winter night is clear,  
And the breezes blithe without.  
But a rag to wrap the child !  
That were something ! Sooth, its wild

Rascal brother fled, and bore  
With him all the clouts it wore.  
Look, it lies half naked—blue,  
Stiff and stark and frozen through,  
By the storm-wind's icy breath.

BRAND.

Woman, on the road to death,  
Free thy infant from thy doom ;  
Free him from thy grief and gloom :  
Of his birth I'll blot the brand.

THE WOMAN.

Much, sooth, THOU dost understand !  
Such a wonder none on earth  
Can, nor shall do, though he can !  
War on you that set the ban,—  
Wot ye where it was, that birth ?  
In a ditch-side, on the ground,  
Gamblers drank and shouted round—  
Christen'd in the sleety slime,  
Cross'd with charcoal-ashes' grime,  
Suckled with a spirit-flask ;—  
When his mother bore him first  
There were some stood by and cursed,  
Who could they be, do you ask ?  
Bless you ! Why, the baby's father,  
Or,—the baby's fathers rather !

BRAND.

Agnes ?

AGNES.

Yes.

M



## BRAND

BRAND.

Thy duty's clear.

AGNES

[*shuddering*].

Never ! never ! Brand, to her !

THE WOMAN.

Give me, give me ! Give me all !  
Silk and broider'd jacket small !  
Nought's too good, and nought too bad,  
If 'twill warm my starving lad.  
He'll be going by and by.  
Thaw his body ere he die !

BRAND

[*to AGNES*].

Choice is calling ! Hear'st thou now ?

THE WOMAN.

Store enough of clothes hast thou  
For thy dead child : hast thou none  
For my death-doom'd living one ?

BRAND.

Is not this a warning cry  
Importuning bodefully ?

THE WOMAN.

Give !

AGNES.

'Tis sacrilege blood-red !  
Desecration of the dead !

BRAND.

Vainly given to death he was  
If thou at the threshold pause.

AGNES  
[*crushed*].

I obey. My heart's quick root  
I will trample under foot.  
Woman, come thou and receive,  
I will share it with thee.

THE WOMAN.

Give !

BRAND.

SHARE it, say'st thou ?—Agnes ; SHARE it ?

AGNES  
[*wildly*].

I will rather die than spare it  
All ! See, inch by inch I've bent  
To thy will ; my force is spent !  
Half's enough ; she needs no more !

BRAND.

Was the whole too much before,  
When for THY child it was meant ?

AGNES  
[*gives*].

Woman, take ; in this was clad  
At the font my little lad.  
Here the scarf, cloak, mantle, good  
For the night-air, here the hood  
Warm for winter ; take this last——

THE WOMAN.

Give me !

BRAND.

Is this ALL thou hast ?

**BRAND**

## AGNES

[gives again].

Take the crowning vesture worn,  
By the child to Death's Font borne !

## THE WOMAN.

So ! I see there's nothing more.  
I'll clear out without delay,  
Dress my baby at the door—  
Then with all my pack away !

[Goes.]

## AGNES

[in violent inner conflict ; at length asks].

Is it reason, Brand, to lay  
Further bidding on me ?

BRAND.

Say,  
Didst thou with a glad heart go  
To thy task of giving?

AGNES.

No.

BRAND.

Then thy gift is vainly will'd  
And His bidding unfulfill'd.

[*Going.*]

AGNES.

[remains silent until he is near the door,  
then calls].

**Brand !**

BRAND.

## What wilt thou ?

AGNES.

I have lied—

See, I'm humbled, I am grieved.  
Never knew'st thou nor believed,  
Anything was left beside.

BRAND.

Well?

AGNES.

*[takes a folded child's cap from her bosom].*

See, ONE I thought to hide—

One!

BRAND.

The CAP?

AGNES.

Yes, tear-bewet,  
Clammy with his mortal sweat,  
There in my beating bosom set!

BRAND.

In thy idol-bonds abide.

*[Going.]*

AGNES.

Hold!

BRAND.

What wilt thou?

AGNES.

Thou dost know.

*[Holds out the cap to him.]*

BRAND

*[approaches and asks, without taking it]*  
Gladly given?

## BRAND

AGNES.

Gladly !

BRAND.

So.

At the door she lingers yet.

[Goes.]

AGNES.

Shiver'd, shatter'd—pluck'd away—

All that bound me to the clay.

*[Stands a while motionless ; by degrees her face assumes an expression of radiant gladness. BRAND returns ; she flies joyously towards him, flings herself about his neck, and cries.]*

I am free, Brand, I am free !

BRAND.

Agnes !

AGNES.

Night is fled from me !

All the terrors that oppress'd

Like an incubus my breast,

In the gulf are sunk to rest !

Will hath conquer'd in the fray,

Cloud and mist are swept away ;

Through the night, athwart the Dead,

Streaks of morning glimmer red.

Graveyard ! Graveyard ! By the word

Now no more a tear is stirr'd ;

By the name no wound is riven,

Risen is the child to heaven !

BRAND.

Agnes ! Thou hast conquered now !

AGNES.

I indeed have conquer'd. Yes ;  
Conquer'd death and bitterness !  
Oh, look up, look heavenward, thou !  
See, before the throne he stands—  
As in old days—radiant, glad,  
To us stretching down his hands !  
Though a thousand mouths I had,  
Leave to ask, and to obtain,  
Never one of them should pray  
For his coming back again.  
O how wond'rous is God's way !  
By that sacrifice, so grievous,  
Won from bondage is my soul ;  
He was given us but to leave us,  
Died to lure me to the goal.  
Thanks be to thee that thy hand  
Stoutly strove and firmly led—  
Ah, I saw thine own heart bled.  
Now it is for THEE, instead,  
In the vale of choice to stand,  
Now for THEE to hear the call  
Of the awful NOUGHT or ALL.

BRAND.

Agnes, this is darkly said ;—  
Vanquish'd, lo, our sorrow lies !

AGNES.

Thou forget'st the word of dread :  
WHOSO SEES JEHOVAH DIES !

## BRAND

*[starts back].*

Woe upon me ! What a light  
Thou hast kindled ! Never ! No !  
I have stalwart hands for fight,  
And I will not let thee go !  
Tear all earthly ties from me,  
All possessions I will lose,  
Only never, never thee !

## AGNES.

At the cross-way stand'st thou : choose !  
Quench the kindled light I brought,  
Fence the fountain of my thought,  
Give me back my idol treasures  
(Still she lingers by the door),  
Give me back the earthly pleasures  
Of the bright, blind days of yore ;  
Thrust me back into the pit  
Where till now I lulled my sin,  
Deeper, deeper thrust me in—  
Thou canst lightly compass it ;  
Clip my wings and check my flight,  
Load my feet, and drag me bound  
Down, down from thy dizzy height  
To my lowly native ground ;  
Let me lead the life I led  
When the darkness yet was dread ;  
If thou darest thus to lose,  
Then, as ever, I am thine ;  
At the cross-way stand'st thou : choose !

BRAND.

Woe, if such a choice were mine.  
Ah, but in some place afar,  
Where no bitter memories are,  
Death and darkness thou shalt brave !

AGNES.

Hast thou HERE thy work forgotten,  
Holy work—and holy grave ?  
And the thousands sin-besotten,  
It is HERE thy task to save—  
Those thou guidest for God's sake  
To the Fountain that renews ?  
At the cross-way stand'st thou : choose !

BRAND.

Then I have no choice to make.

AGNES

*[throws herself on his neck].*

Thanks for that, and thanks for all !  
Thou the weary one hast led ;  
Over me the dank mists fall,  
Thou wilt watch beside my bed.

BRAND.

Sleep ! thy day's work now is done.

AGNES.

Done, and now the lamp alight.  
I have fought out all my might,  
I am weary of the sun.  
Oh, but praising God is best !  
Brand, good-night !



*BRAND*

BRAND.

Good-night !

AGNES.

Good-night !

Thanks for all. Now I will rest.

[*Goes.*]

BRAND

[*clenches his hands against his breast.*]

Soul, be patient in thy pain !

Triumph in its bitter cost.

All to lose was all to gain ;

Nought abideth but the Lost !

## THE FIFTH ACT

*[A year and a half later. The new Church stands complete, and adorned for consecration. The river runs close beside it. A misty morning, early.]*

*The SEXTON is busy hanging garlands outside the Church ; shortly after comes the SCHOOLMASTER.]*

THE SCHOOLMASTER.

At work already ?

THE SEXTON.

None too soon.

Lend me a hand ; I must festoon

The path, to keep the march in trim.

THE SCHOOLMASTER.

Before the Manse I see ascending

Something that rears a rounded rim——

THE SEXTON.

Ay, surely, surely !

THE SCHOOLMASTER.

What is pending ?

THE SEXTON.

Why, it is what they call a shield

With Parson's name in a gold field.

## THE SCHOOLMASTER.

To-day the valley's in high feather.  
From far and wide they're flocking hither,  
The fjord with sails is all agleam.

## THE SEXTON.

Yes ; they've awaken'd from their dream.  
In the late Pastor's days, no breast  
With bitterness and strife was cumber'd,  
Each slumber'd as his neighbour slumber'd,  
—I'm not quite certain which is best.

## THE SCHOOLMASTER.

Life, Sexton, life !

## THE SEXTON.

Yet you and I  
Pass this 'life' unregarding by ;  
How comes it ?

## THE SCHOOLMASTER.

Why, before, the folk  
Slumber'd, and nowise toil'd, as we did ;  
We fell asleep when they awoke,  
Because we were no longer needed.

## THE SEXTON.

But yet you said that life was best ?

## THE SCHOOLMASTER.

By Dean and deacon that's profess'd.  
And I too say so, like the rest,—  
Provided, mind, the 'life' in view  
Is that of the great Residue.

But we two serve another law  
Than that which holds the mass in awe ;  
Set by the State to guard and guide,—  
Look, we must stand against the tide,  
Cherish the Church and Education,  
And keep aloof from agitation,  
Briefly, in nothing take a side.

## THE SEXTON.

But Parson's in it, heart and soul.

## THE SCHOOLMASTER.

And just in that forgets his rôle.  
His own superiors, well I know,  
Look with displeasure on his action,  
And, dared they but offend his faction,  
Had thrown him over long ago.  
But he is fine ; he smells a rat ;  
He's got a recipe for that.  
He builds the Church. Here you may glue  
All eyes up, if you will but do.  
WHAT'S done none has a thought to spare for ;  
The DOING of it's all they care for.  
So they who follow, and we who lead,  
All equally are men of deed.

## THE SEXTON.

Well, you have sat in the great Thing,  
And ought to know the Land and Folk ;  
But one who travell'd through the glen  
A little after we awoke  
Said, we'd been sleeping folks till then,  
But, having waked,—were PROMISING.

THE SCHOOLMASTER.

Yes ; we're a promising folk, of course,—  
And mighty promises we're giving,—  
So fast we stride, we'll soon be living  
Elucidations of their force.

THE SEXTON.

One thing I've ponder'd many a day ;  
You've studied,—what do folks intend  
By that same ' People's Promise,' pray ?

THE SCHOOLMASTER.

A People's Promise, my good friend ?  
That were a long investigation ;  
But 'tis a thing that is pursued  
By force of sheer anticipation ;  
A grand Idea they must make good—  
In FUTURE, be it understood.

THE SEXTON.

Thanks ; I see that at any rate ;  
But there's another point I'd fain  
Beg of you briefly to explain.

THE SCHOOLMASTER.

Speak freely.

THE SEXTON.

Tell me, at what date  
Comes, what is call'd the future ?

THE SCHOOLMASTER.

Why,

It never does come !

THE SEXTON.

Never?

THE SCHOOLMASTER.

No,

And only follows Nature so.  
For when it comes, you see, 'tis grown  
The Present, and the Future's flown.

THE SEXTON.

Why, yes, to that there's no reply;  
That logic one must needs accept.  
But—when then is the promise kept?

THE SCHOOLMASTER.

A Promise is a future-dated  
Pact, as I have already stated;  
'Tis kept in Future.

THE SEXTON.

That is clear.

When will the Future, though, be here?

THE SCHOOLMASTER

[*aside*].

You blessed Sexton!

[*aloud*.]

Worthy friend,

Must I the argument recall?  
The Future cannot come at all,  
Because its coming is its end.

THE SEXTON.

Thank you.

## THE SCHOOLMASTER.

In all conceptions lies  
Something that looks like artifice,  
But yet is quite direct and plain,—  
That is to say, for any brain  
Able to reckon up to ten.  
To MAKE a promise means, at last,  
To BREAK it,—spite of best intent ;  
Truth to one's word has always pass'd  
For hard ; but you may just as well  
Prove it purely impossible,—  
If you've an eye for argument.—  
There, let this Promise-question be !  
Come tell me——!

## THE SEXTON.

Hist !

## THE SCHOOLMASTER.

What is it ?

## THE SEXTON.

Hark !

## THE SCHOOLMASTER.

I hear the organ play !

## THE SEXTON.

'Tis he.

## THE SCHOOLMASTER.

The Pastor ?

## THE SEXTON.

Even so.

THE SCHOOLMASTER.

Save the mark !

But he is out betimes !

THE SEXTON.

I guess

He stirr'd no pillow yesternight.

THE SCHOOLMASTER.

What do you say ?

THE SEXTON.

All is not right.

He's felt the pang of loneliness

Since first his widowhood began.

He hides his sorrow all he can ;

But, whiles, it may not be controll'd ;

His heart's a jar that will not hold,

And overflows by base and brim ;—

So then he plays. 'Tis like a wild

Weeping for buried wife and child.

THE SCHOOLMASTER.

It is as if they talk'd with him——

THE SEXTON.

As if ONE suffer'd, ONE consoled——

THE SCHOOLMASTER.

H'm—if one dared to be affected !

THE SEXTON.

Ah,—if one did not serve the State !

N



THE SCHOOLMASTER.

Ah,—if one bore no leaden weight  
Of forms that have to be respected !

THE SEXTON.

Ah,—if one dared toss tape and seal  
And ledger to the deuce for ever !

THE SCHOOLMASTER.

And leave off striving to be clever ;  
And, Sexton, if one dared to FEEL !

THE SEXTON.

No one is near,—let's feel, my friend !

THE SCHOOLMASTER.

We cannot fitly condescend  
To smirch ourselves in human slime.  
Let no man, says the Parson, dare  
To be two things at the same time ;  
And, with the best will, no one can  
Be an official and a man ;  
Our part in all things is, to swear  
By our great exemplar—the Mayor.

THE SEXTON.

Why just by him ?

THE SCHOOLMASTER.

Do you recall  
The fire that wreck'd his house, and yet  
The deeds were rescued, one and all ?

THE SEXTON.

It was an evening——

## THE SCHOOLMASTER.

Wild and wet,  
And like ten toiling men toiled he ;  
But indoors stood the Devil in glee  
Guffawing, and his wife shriek'd out :  
'O save your soul, sweet husband ! See,  
Satan will have you !' Then a shout  
Rang backward through the surging vapours :  
'My soul may go to hell for me ;  
Just lend a hand to save the papers !'  
Look, that's a Mayor—without, within !  
From top to toe, from core to skin ;  
He'll win his way, I'm certain, yonder,  
Where his life's toil shall have its price.

## THE SEXTON.

And where may that be ?

## THE SCHOOLMASTER.

Where, I wonder,  
But in the good Mayors' Paradise.

## THE SEXTON.

My learned friend !

## THE SCHOOLMASTER.

What now ?

## THE SEXTON.

A token

Of our fermenting age I hear,  
Methinks, in every word you've spoken ;  
For that it does ferment is clear.  
Witness the reverence all refuse  
To old-established Wont and Use.

## THE SCHOOLMASTER.

What moulders, in the mould's its doom,  
What rots must nourish what is fresh ;  
Their vitals canker and consume,  
Let them cough up the imposthume,  
Or to the grave with their dead flesh !  
There's ferment, yes ; past fear or hope,  
That's plain without a telescope.  
The day our ancient Church lay low,  
Everything with it seem'd to go  
Wherein our life struck root and found  
Its home-soil and its native-ground.

## THE SEXTON.

Then on the throng a stillness came.  
'Down with it ! Down with it !' they cried  
At first ; but soon that clamour died,  
And many felt their ears a-flame,  
And stole shy glances of distrust,  
When the ancestral House of Prayer  
Was to be levell'd—then and there,—  
By hands unhallow'd, in the dust.

## THE SCHOOLMASTER.

But countless bonds, they fancied, knit  
Them ever to the ghost of it,  
So long as yonder Palace lack'd  
The final seal of consecration ;  
And so in anguish'd expectation  
They watch'd it growing into fact,  
And blinked before the glorious End,  
When the old tatter should descend

And the new colours flaunt the gale.  
But ever as the spire upclomb  
They grew more silent and more pale,  
And now,—well, now the End is come.

THE SEXTON.

Look at the throng. Both young and old  
Swarm hither.

THE SCHOOLMASTER.

And by thousands told.—  
How still they are !

THE SEXTON.

And yet they moan,  
Like sea fore-feeling tempest's fret.

THE SCHOOLMASTER.

It is the People's hearts that groan,  
As if, with piercing doubts beset,  
The great new age they did forebode,  
Or were in solemn sessions met  
To nominate another God.  
Where, where's the priest ?—I stifle here.  
Would heaven that I could disappear !

THE SEXTON.

I too, I too !

THE SCHOOLMASTER.

In hours like this  
No man well knows how deep he is.  
Each depth a deeper depth revealing,  
We will, then will not, and then doubt——

THE SEXTON.

My friend !

THE SCHOOLMASTER.

My friend !

THE SEXTON.

H'm !

THE SCHOOLMASTER.

Speak it out !

THE SEXTON.

I think, in very truth, we're feeling !

THE SCHOOLMASTER.

Feeling ? Not I !

THE SEXTON.

Nor I, take warning !

A single witness I defy !

THE SCHOOLMASTER.

We're men, not school-girls, you and I.

My youngsters wait for me. Good-morning.

[Goes.]

THE SEXTON.

Just now I'd visions like a fool ;

Now I'm again collected, cool,

And close as clasps ! To work I'll press !

Here's no more scope for hand or tool,

And Satan's couch is idleness.

[Goes out at the other side.]

[The organ, which during what precedes has been heard in an undertone, suddenly peals forth, and ends with a discordant shriek. Shortly afterwards, BRAND comes out.]

## BRAND.

No, I vainly, vainly seek  
To unlock the heart of sound ;  
All the song becomes a shriek.  
Walls and arches, vault and ground,  
Seem to stoop and crowd and throng,  
Seem to clasp with iron force,  
Seem to close around the song,  
As the coffin round the corse !  
Vain my effort, vain my suit,  
All the organ's music's mute.  
Fain a prayer I would have spoken,  
But my lifted voice fell broken,—  
Like the muffled moan it fell  
Of a riven and rusted bell.  
'Twas as if the Lord were seated  
In the chancel, and beheld,  
And in wrath, while I entreated,  
All my piteous prayer repell'd !—  
Great shall be the House of God ;  
In my confidence I swore it ;  
Fearless, smote and wreck'd and tore it,  
Swept it level with the sod.  
Now the finish'd work stands fast.  
As the people throng before it,  
Still they cry : 'How vast ! how vast !'  
Is it they see true or I,  
Who no vastness can descry ?  
Is it great ? The thing I will'd,  
Is it in THIS House fulfill'd ?  
Can the rushing fire of passion  
That begot it, HERE be still'd ?  
Was the Temple of this fashion

That I dream'd should overspan  
All the misery of Man ?

Ah, had Agnes stay'd with me,  
Not thus vainly had I striven !  
Small things greatly she could see,  
From doubt's anguish set me free,  
Clasp together Earth and Heaven  
Like the green roof of the tree.

[*He observes the preparations for the festival.*]

All with wreaths and banners hung ;  
Children practising their song ;  
To the Manse they surge and throng,—  
Festal greetings they would bring me ;—  
Yonder gleams my name in gold !—  
Give me light, O God,—or fling me  
Fathom-deep beneath this mould !  
In an hour begins the Feast ;  
Every thought and every tongue  
Will be ringing with 'the priest' !  
All their thoughts I can discern ;  
All their words I feel them burn ;  
All their praise, on elf-wings sped,  
Rives me like an icy blast !  
Oh, to be enfolded fast  
In oblivion, hide my head  
In a wild beast's hole at last !

THE MAYOR

[*enters in full uniform, radiant with  
satisfaction, and greets him*].

Here is the great day come at last,  
The Sabbath to the toiling six ;  
Now we can strike our sail, and fix

Our Sunday pennon to the mast,  
 Glide softly with the gliding flood  
 And find that all is very good.  
 Bravo !—great, noble man, whose fame  
 Will soon be far and wide related.  
 Bravo !—I'm moved, yet all the same  
 Most inexpressibly elated !  
 But you appear—— ?

BRAND.

I'm suffocated.

THE MAYOR.

Pooh, a mere momentary whim !  
 Preach you now, till it roars again !—  
 Fill the folks' bushel to the brim.  
 Not one his wonder can contain,  
 The resonance is so full and plain.

BRAND.

Indeed ?

THE MAYOR.

The Dean himself is warm  
 In admiration and delight.  
 And then, what elegance of form,  
 And what a grandeur, what a height  
 In every part——

BRAND.

You've noted this ?

THE MAYOR.

What noted ?

BRAND.

It seems great to you ?



THE MAYOR.

Why, it not only *SEEMS*, but *IS*,  
No matter what the point of view.

BRAND.

It is great ? Really ? That is true— ?

THE MAYOR.

Great ?—yes, God bless me,—and to spare—  
For folks so far to North. Elsewhere  
They've higher standards, I'm aware ;  
But among us who captive dwell  
Amid drear wastes and barren mounds,  
On the scant verge of fjord and fell,  
Its greatness 'mazes and confounds.

BRAND.

Yes, that is so, and all we do  
Is,—change an old lie for a new.

THE MAYOR.

What ?

BRAND.

We have lured their hearts away  
From the time-honour'd gloom and mould  
To soaring spire and open day.  
'How venerable !' they cried of old.  
'How vast !' in chorus now they roar—  
'The like was never seen before !'

THE MAYOR.

My worthy friend, I needs must hold  
His breeding scarcely *quantum suff.*  
For whom it is not great enough.

## BRAND.

But clear it shall be unto all  
That, as its' stands, the Church is small.  
To keep that hidden were to lie.

## THE MAYOR.

Nay, listen,—let such whimsies fly !  
What can it profit to dispraise  
What you yourself have toil'd to raise ?  
You've satisfied their utmost dream ;  
It seems to them more rich and rare  
Than aught they e'er saw anywhere :—  
Let it continue so to seem !  
Why should we vex their silly sight  
With proffers of the flaming link,  
When they're indifferent to light ?  
The question's only what they THINK.  
It does not signify a jot  
Though the Church were a pigeon-cot,  
If in the faith they're rooted fast,  
That it is infinitely vast.

## BRAND.

In every matter the same thought.

## THE MAYOR.

To-day, moreover, we hold fête ;  
The whole assembly is our guest ;  
It is a point of etiquette  
That everything should look its best ;  
And for your own sake, most of all,  
It were judicious to keep clear  
Of that sore fact—that it is small.

BRAND.

How so ?

THE MAYOR.

Well, listen, you shall hear.  
Firstly, the headmen of the town  
Are giving you a piece of plate,  
Whose graven inscription is frustrate  
If the work's size is whittled down ;  
And then the Ode, composed express,  
And my inaugural address,—  
You leave them helpless in the lurch,  
Docking the greatness of the Church.  
You see then, you must yield your doubt,  
And boldly face the matter out.

BRAND.

I see, what oft has stung my eye,  
A lying triumph crown the lie.

THE MAYOR.

But, in God's name, my worthy friend,  
Where do these strong expressions tend ?  
However, waiving points of taste,  
Hear now my second reason,—gold,  
As that was silver ; for, behold,  
You, like a chosen son, are graced  
With favour in the royal sight ;  
In short,—you have been named a Knight !  
This very day you'll walk elate,  
Cross upon breast, a titled man.

BRAND.

Another, heavier cross's weight  
I bear ; take THAT from me who can.

## THE MAYOR.

What's this? You do not seem to shake  
With agitation at such prize?  
You mystery of mysteries!  
But pray consider, for God's sake——

## BRAND

[*stamping*].

This is mere babble of vain speech :—  
Nothing I learn and nothing teach ;  
You have not grasp'd the smallest shred  
Of the true sense of what I said.  
I meant not greatness men compute,  
And measure by the inch and foot,  
But that which, viewless, darts and streams,  
Pierces the soul with frosts and fires,  
That beckons to impassion'd dreams,  
And like the starlit heaven inspires—  
That—leave me ! I am worn, oppress'd ;—  
Convince, teach, edify the rest.

[*Goes up towards the Church.*]

## THE MAYOR

[*to himself*].

In such a labyrinth who can stray  
And find an issue? Greatness lay  
In something that is 'viewless,' 'streams,'  
'Not inchwise measured,' 'lifts to dreams,'  
And 'starlit heaven'? It went so, surely?  
Has he been lunching prematurely?

[*Goes.*]

## BRAND

*[comes down over the open ground].*

So desolate on the upland drear  
I never stood as I stand here ;  
My impotent questionings evoke  
Echoes that cackle and that croak.

*[Looks towards the MAYOR.]*

For him, I would my heel might bruise  
His head ! Each time I make emprise  
To loose him from the bond of lies,  
With shameless wantonness he spews  
His rotten soul before my eyes !—

O Agnes, why wast thou so frail ?  
Would that this hollow game were done,  
Where none give in, and none prevail ;—  
Yes, hopeless he that fights alone !

## THE DEAN

*[coming up].*

O, my beloved ! O, my sheep—!  
Nay, I beg pardon,—would have said  
My reverend brother !—cannot keep  
My predication from my head ;  
I got it yesterday by rote,  
The taste still lingers in my throat.  
Enough of that.—To you I offer  
My thanks, whose energy began,  
Whose firmness carried through, the plan,  
Despite the babbler and the scoffer ;  
Fell'd that which was about to fall,  
And worthily restored it all !

BRAND.

Far from that yet.

THE DEAN.

How say you, friend ?  
Is Consecration not the end ?

BRAND.

A House new-built asks, as well,  
A cleansed Soul, therein to dwell.

THE DEAN.

All that will come without our stir.  
So gay, so elegant a roof  
Will be an adequate reproof  
To every unwash'd worshipper.  
And that delightful sounding-board,  
That doubles every pious word,  
Will render without fail our flocks  
Fivescore per cent. more orthodox.  
Results so notable as these  
The first-rate Nationalities  
Themselves, 'tis said, can hardly better.—  
For this your Country is your debtor,  
Yours only ; let me then express  
These heartfelt, brotherly thanks of mine,  
To be re-echoed, as I guess,  
In winged words across the wine,  
By many a fiery young divine,  
When at the festal board we crown  
This the great day of your renown.—  
But, my dear Brand, you look so faint— ?

BRAND.

My heart and hope have long been spent.

THE DEAN.

No wonder ;—with so grave a care,  
And all unaided and unfriended.  
But now the worst of it is ended,  
And all gives promise of a splendid  
Day for our function. Don't despair !  
All will go well. Reflect ! A throng  
Has gather'd, many thousand strong,  
From far-off parishes,—and who  
Can vie in eloquence with you ?  
See where your reverend brethren stand,  
To welcome you with heart and hand ;  
While all these lowly bosoms beat  
With ardour for you, first to last !  
And then, the work, so ably plann'd,  
The decoration, so complete,—  
The general theme—How great ! How vast !  
—And the unparallel'd repast !  
Into the kitchen I was looking  
Just now, and saw the calf a-cooking.  
Nay, Brand, a pretty beast, I vow !  
You must have had some trouble, now,  
In these hard times, before you found  
So fine a bit of flesh to cater,  
With meat at half-a-crown a pound !  
But that can be deferr'd till later.  
I'm on another errand bound.

BRAND.

Speak freely ; slash, stab, rive and rend !

THE DEAN.

I have a milder way, my friend.  
 But briefly ; for our duties press.  
 One little matter, I confess,  
 I'd have you from to-day set right ;  
 A task that cannot but be light.  
 Nay, I imagine you can guess  
 Half what I'm hinting at, at least ?  
 I mean, your duties as a priest.  
 Hitherto you have been a loose  
 Observer still, of Wont and Use ;  
 But Use and Wont, if not the best  
 Of things, are yet the needfulest.  
 Well, well, I will not be severe ;  
 You're young, and but a novice here,  
 Town-bred, and scarcely understand  
 What country usages demand.  
 But now, now it is urgent, friend,  
 That lack of judgment to amend.  
 You hitherto have too much heeded  
 What this man and what that man needed ;  
 That error (in your private ear)  
 Is grievous. Weigh them in the block ;  
 Use the same comb for all the flock ;  
 You won't repent it, never fear.

BRAND.

Be more explicit.

THE DEAN.

The thing's clear.  
 You for the Parish's behoof  
 Have built a Church. That is the woof  
 That robes the spirit of Law and Peace ;

o



For to the State, religion is  
 The power that lifts and purifies,  
 The stronghold where its safety lies,  
 The universal moral measure.  
 You see, the State is scant of treasure,  
 And wants full value for its pence.  
 'Good Christians' means 'good citizens'.  
 Do you suppose it pays its pelf  
 To be for God and Man a tool,  
 And bring annoyance on itself?  
 No, faith, the State is not a fool;  
 And all our course would run amiss,  
 Did not the State, by strictest rule,  
 Look only to the life that is.  
 But the State's object, my good friend  
 Through its officials must be gain'd,  
 In this case through its priests——

BRAND.

Each word

Is wisdom! Speak!

THE DEAN.

I'm near the end.

This Church, you see, you have conferr'd  
 Upon the State, for its sole profit;  
 And, therefore, all the uses of it  
 Must to the State's advantage tend.  
 This is the meaning, note it well,  
 Of our forthcoming celebration,  
 This shall be meant by chiming bell,  
 And this by Gift-deed's recitation.  
 A promise thus the Gift implies,  
 Whose force I'd have you scrutinise——

BRAND.

By God, I never meant it so !

THE DEAN.

Yes ; but it's now too late, you know——

BRAND.

Too late ? Too late ! That will be seen !

THE DEAN.

Be sensible ! I can't keep grave !  
 What is the tragedy therein ?  
 You are not ask'd to promise sin ?  
 Souls do not grow more hard to save  
 Because the Country profits too ;  
 With due discretion and despatch  
 Two masters' bidding you may do ;  
 You were not made a priest, to snatch  
 Peter or Harry's single soul  
 Out of the torments of the lake ;  
 But that the Parish as a whole  
 Might of the Shower of Grace partake ;  
 And, the whole Parish saved, it's clear,  
 You save every Parishioner.  
 The State is (what you hardly dream)  
 Exactly HALF republican :  
 Liberty held in strictest ban,  
 Equality in high esteem.  
 Yet is Equality never won  
 But by destroying More and Less,—  
 And it is THAT you have not done !  
 Nay, you have striven to express  
 And emphasise unlikenesses

That slumber'd hitherto unknown.  
Men, mere Church-members till of late,  
To Personalities are grown.  
That does no service to the State ;  
And thus it is, each Parish rate,  
Each offering to the common good,  
Is from unwilling niggards bled ;  
The Church no longer is the hood  
That fits alike on every head.

BRAND.

O, vistas infinite unfold !

THE DEAN.

Don't be cast down ; no gain in that ;  
Though I must own I shudder at  
The dire confusion I behold.  
But while there's life there's hope, and you  
Are by this Gift baptized anew  
To obligations yet more great  
Of serving, by your Church, the State.  
Men need a rule in all they do ;  
Or reckless forces, breaking loose,  
Like colts undaunted by the curb,  
Spurn gates and fences, and disturb  
The thousand landmarks of old Use.  
Each order'd mode of life proclaims  
One Law, that goes by many names.  
The Artist calls it SCHOOL, and I'm  
Mistaken if I have not heard  
Our soldiers call it KEEPING TIME.  
Ah yes, friend, that's the very word !

That's what the State desires at last !  
Double-quick time gets on too fast,  
And goose-step lags too far behind ;  
All men to step alike, and beat  
The selfsame music with their feet,  
That is the method to its mind !

BRAND.

Kennel the eagle ;—and let loose  
On empyrean flights the goose !

THE DEAN.

We, thank the Lord, are not as these ;—  
But if we must use allegory,  
We'll turn to Scripture, if you please.  
For every case it has a story,  
From Genesis to Revelation  
It swarms with stimulating Fable ;  
I will but hint, in illustration,  
At that projected Tower of Babel !  
How did the good folks prosper, pray ?  
And why ? The answer's clear as day ;  
Their ranks divided, sort by sort,  
Each one his private language spoke,  
They drew not in the common yoke,  
Grew 'Personalities,' in short.  
That's HALF the twofold core that lies  
Embedded in this shell of fable ;—  
That all strength, sever'd, is unstable,  
And death-doom'd who the world defies.  
When God desires a man to fall  
He makes him an Original ;  
The Romans had it, 'faith, that God  
Made the man mad : but mad is odd,

And oddness singleness, you know ;  
Therefore who fights without a friend  
Must look to suffer in the end  
The fate that overtook the man  
Whom David posted in the van.

BRAND.

Yes, very likely : but what though ?  
In Death I see not Overthrow.  
And is your faith quite firm and fast  
That had those builders spoken still  
One speech, and acted with one will,  
They would have piled the pinnacle  
Of Babel up to heaven at last ?

THE DEAN.

To heaven ? No, that is where it lies :  
No man gets QUITE to Paradise.  
There, see, we have the second core,  
Embedded in this shell of fable ;—  
That every building is unstable  
Which to the starry heaven would soar !

BRAND.

Yet, Jacob's ladder reach'd that goal.  
Thither by longing soars the Soul.

THE DEAN.

In THAT way ! Why, God bless me, yes !  
Further discussion's needless there.  
Heaven is the wage of faithfulness,  
Of course, and moral life, and prayer.

But life and faith hold such dissent,  
They only thrive, when kept apart ;  
Six days for toiling hands are meant,  
The seventh, for stirring of the heart ;  
If all the week we preach'd and pray'd,  
The Sabbath had in vain been made.  
God's incense, rightly to be used,  
Must not be lavishly diffused ;  
Worship, like Art, was not created  
To be in perfume dissipated.  
The Ideal you may safely sound  
From pulpit's holy vantage-ground ;  
But with your surplice lay it by,  
When you emerge beneath the sky.  
All things, as I have said, are based  
On laws that strictly must be traced,  
And my sole end in speaking is  
To give this fact due emphasis.

BRAND.

One thing I very clearly see :  
No State Soul-case is fit for me.

THE MAYOR.

A perfect fit, I will engage,  
My friend,—but on a loftier stage :—  
You must go up——

BRAND.

Is that an end  
I reach by plunging in the mire ?

THE DEAN.

Whoso him humbleth shall go higher !  
Hooks will not catch, unless they bend.

BRAND.

Man can't be used, unless he perish !

THE DEAN.

Good God ! How can you think I cherish  
Any such purpose ?

BRAND.

Ay, indeed,  
That's the condition ! First to bleed !  
Your bloodless spirit to put on  
Man must be first a skeleton !

THE DEAN.

I would not put the lancet through  
A very kitten—far less you ;  
But yet I thought no harm were done  
In leaving just ajar the door  
That opens, where I went before.

BRAND.

And do you know what you have sought ?  
This, that upon the State's cock-cry  
I that Ideal should deny  
For which I until now have fought ?

THE DEAN.

Deny, friend ? Who makes such request ?  
Duty is all I bid you follow :  
I ask you quietly to swallow  
That which your people can't digest.  
Keep it intact, if you're disposed,—  
But yet hermetically closed ;

At home, in God's name, soar and swell,  
Not as a public spectacle ;  
Trust me, the will that won't be bent  
Brings its unfailing punishment.

BRAND.

Ay, fear of torment, hope of gain,  
Are on thy brow the brand of Cain,  
Which cries that thou by worldly art  
Hast slain the Abel in thy heart !

THE DEAN

[*to himself*].

Upon my word, he calls me 'Thou' ;  
That is too much !—

[*aloud*]

I will not now  
Prolong our strife, but, to conclude,  
Would have it clearly understood,  
That if you'd prosper, you must weigh  
What land you live in, and what day.  
For no man wins the fight with fortune,  
But in alliance with his time.  
Which of the men who paint and rhyme  
Dare fail when social claims importune ?  
Look at our soldiers ! Why, the gleam  
Of sabres is become a dream !  
And wherefore ? Since a law commands :  
Postpone thy own need to the Land's !  
Let each his own excrescence pare,  
Neither uplift him, nor protrude,  
But vanish in the multitude.  
'Humane the age is,' says the Mayor :



And if humanely it be met  
Will bring you fame and fortune yet.  
But all your angles must be rounded,  
Your gnarls and bosses scraped and pounded ;  
You must grow sleek as others do,  
All singularities eschew,  
If you would labour without let.

BRAND.

Away ! away !

THE DEAN.

I quite agree.  
Men of your stamp must finally  
Be summon'd to a higher seat ;  
But, in the greater as the less,  
Only the regimental dress  
Will make your happiness complete.  
The corporal, staff in hand, must knock  
The sense of Time into his flock ;  
For, to our mind, the best of all  
Commanders is the corporal.  
Just as the corporal leads his men  
Into the church, battalion-wise,  
So must the priest lead his, again,  
By parishes to Paradise.  
It's all so easy !—Faith, you see,  
Broad-based upon authority ;  
Which, being upon learning stay'd,  
May be implicitly obey'd :  
While rules and ritual leave no doubt  
How faith ought to be acted out.

Wherefore, my brother,—pluck up cheer !  
Employ the time for meditation ;  
Reflect upon your situation,  
And don't give way to futile fear !  
I'll see just now if I can pitch  
My music to a higher note ;  
Though with an unaccustom'd throat,  
A sounding-board 's so seldom here.  
Farewell, farewell ! I mean to preach  
Of human nature's sinful prime,  
God's image nigh obliterated.—  
But now I'm thinking it is time  
The inner mortal should be baited.

[Goes.]

BRAND

[stands for a moment as if petrified  
in thought].

All I have offer'd for my call,  
God's as I vainly held it,—all ;  
And now one trumpet-blast reveal'd  
Before what idols I had kneel'd.  
Not yet ! not yet ! I'm not their slave !  
Yon churchyard has had blood to sup,  
Light, life I've laid in yonder grave ;—  
My soul shall not be yielded up !

O horrible to stand alone,—  
Amid a glimmering world of dead ;  
Horrible to receive a stone,  
Howe'er I hunger after bread.—

How true, how deadly true, his strain,—  
But yet how vacant and how vain.  
Dim broods God's dove of piercing eyes ;  
Alas, to me she never flies.—

O, had I but ONE faithful breast—  
To give me strength, to give me rest ;

[EINAR, *pale, emaciated, dressed in black, comes  
along the road and stops on perceiving  
BRAND.*]

BRAND

[*cries out*].

You, Einar ?

EINAR.

By that name I'm known.

BRAND.

I was just thirsting for a breast  
That was not made of wood or stone !  
Come, to my heart of hearts be press'd !

EINAR.

My haven's found, I am at rest.

BRAND.

You bear a grudge for the event  
Of our last meeting——

EINAR.

In no wise ;  
I blame you not. You were but sent  
To be the passive instrument  
Wherewith God oped my erring eyes.

BRAND

[*starts back*].

What tongue is this ?

EINAR.

The tongue of peace—  
The tongue they learn, who, timely torn  
From Sleep of Sin, awake new-born.

BRAND.

Marvellous ! I had heard of this,—  
That you in quite another way  
Were walking——

EINAR.

I was led astray  
By pride, in my own strength secure.  
The idols the world holds divine,  
The talent I was told was mine,  
My singer's voice, were all malign  
Seductions unto Satan's lure.  
But God (I praise Him) for me wrought,  
Left not His erring sheep unsought,  
He help'd me in my hour of need.

BRAND.

Help'd you—in what way ?

EINAR.

Yes, indeed :—

I fell.

BRAND.

Fell ? How ?

EINAR.

To dissipation.  
With gambling tastes He me imbued——

BRAND.

And THAT was God's solicitude ?

EINAR.

'Twas the first step to my salvation.  
On that my health He undermined,  
The talent from my fingers fled,  
My love of revelry declined,  
Then, to the hospital consign'd,  
Long I lay sick, and round my bed  
Flames seem'd to glare, and on each wall  
Myriads of giant flies to crawl ;—  
Came out, and soon acquaintance made  
With certain sisters, three in all,  
Soldiers in God's cause arm'd and paid.  
And they, together with a priest,  
Me from the yoke of Earth released  
Pluck'd me from Sin that held me fast,  
And made me the Lord's child at last.

BRAND.

Indeed ?

EINAR.

Divergent paths we follow ;  
One seeks the height, and one the hollow.

BRAND.

But after ?

EINAR.

True ; I turn'd me thence,  
To preach for Total Abstinence ;  
But since that Work for the unwary  
Is strewn with perilous temptation,  
I chose another occupation,  
And travel now as Missionary——

BRAND.

Where ?

EINAR.

To the Caudate-nigger State.

But now, I think, we 'll separate ;

My time is precious——

BRAND.

Won't you stay ?

You see here 's festival to-day.

EINAR.

Thanks, no ; the swarthy Heathens wait.—

Farewell.

[*Going.*]

BRAND.

And does no memory stir,

Bidding you ask— ?

EINAR.

Of what ?

BRAND.

Of her

Who would have grieved at the abyss,

That parts another day from this.

EINAR.

I guess your meaning ; you refer

To that young female, whose allure

Held me in pleasure's net secure,

Till Faith's ablution made me pure.

—Yes, and how is it then with her ?

*BRAND**BRAND.*

Next year I won her for my wife.

*EINAR.*

That's unimportant, I prefer  
To leave these trivial facts unknown.  
What's *WEIGHTY* I desire alone.

*BRAND.*

God richly bless'd our common life  
With joy and sorrow : The child pined——

*EINAR.*

That's unimportant——

*BRAND.*

So it is ;  
He was but given to be resign'd ;  
Our eyes one day shall look on his.  
But afterwards she also died ;  
Their graves bloom yonder side by side.

*EINAR.*

That's unimportant——

*BRAND.*

That likewise ?

*EINAR.*

Such things are trifles in my eyes,  
How did she die, I want to know ?

*BRAND.*

With Hope that yet a Dawn shall glow,  
With all her heart's rich treasure whole,  
With Will that never lost control,  
With thanks for all that life had lent  
And life had taken away, she went.

EINAR.

Trumpery figments every one.  
Say what the faith she died in was.

BRAND.

Unshaken.

EINAR.

In what?

BRAND.

In God.

EINAR.

Alas,

Only in Him? She is undone.

BRAND.

What say you?

EINAR.

Damn'd, to my regret.

BRAND

[*quietly*].

Go, scoundrel!

EINAR.

You shall feel as well

The clutches of the Lord of hell;—

For both, eternal torments wait.

BRAND.

You, wretch, dare sentence to the Fire!

Yourself late wallow'd in the mire—

P



EINAR.

On me no spot is to be seen ;  
 The tub of Faith has wash'd me clean ;  
 Each splash has vanish'd, scraped and scored  
 On Holiness's washing-board ;  
 In Vigilance's mangle I  
 Have wrung my Adam's-vesture dry ;  
 And shine like snowy surplice fair,  
 Soap-lather'd with the suds of Prayer !

BRAND.

Hold !

EINAR.

Hold, yourself ! Here's sulphur fume,  
 I see the glints of Satan's horn !  
 I am Salvation's good wheat-corn,  
 And you the shovell'd chaff of Doom.

[Goes.]

BRAND

*[looks a while after him ; all at once his  
 eyes flash and he breaks out].*

THAT, that is the man I need !  
 Now all bonds are burst that bound me ;  
 Now my flag shall wave around me  
 Though none follow where I lead !

THE MAYOR

*[comes hastily in].*

Pray, dear Pastor, hasten, do !  
 The procession-people stand  
 Waiting only the command—

BRAND.

Let them come then !

THE MAYOR.

Wanting you !

Pray reflect, and hasten in !  
All impatient to begin,  
See, the whole mass throng and strain ;  
Like a torrent after storm  
On the Manse they surge and swarm,  
Shouting for the Priest. Again,  
Hark you, for 'the Priest' they shout,  
Pray make haste ! I much misdoubt,  
They may scarcely prove humane !

BRAND.

Never will I hide my face  
In the crowd that you command ;  
Let them seek me : here I stand.

THE MAYOR.

Are you sane ?

BRAND.

The path you pace  
Is too narrow for my tread.

THE MAYOR.

And 'twill still grow less and less  
As the people push ahead.  
Zounds ! They spurn at rod and check !  
Parsons, Dean, and Corporation  
Jostled to the brimming beck—!

Quickly, friend, make application  
Of the scourge of your persuasion !  
Ha, too late, they smash the line ;  
The procession is a wreck !

*[The multitude stream in, and break in wild  
disorder through the procession to the  
Church.]*

VOICES.

Priest !

OTHERS.

*[pointing up to the Church-steps, where  
BRAND stands].*

See yonder !

OTHERS AGAIN.

Give the sign !

THE DEAN

*[jostled in the throng].*

Mayor, Mayor, control them, pray !

THE MAYOR.

All my words are thrown away !

THE SCHOOLMASTER

*[to BRAND].*

Speak to them, and cast a gleam  
On their spirits' troubled stream !  
What you summon'd us to see,  
Was it Feast or foolery ?

## BRAND.

O, there stirs a current, then,  
In these stagnant waters.—Men,  
At the crossway stand ye : choose !  
WHOLLY ye must will to lose  
The old vesture of your lust,  
Utterly anew be clad,  
Ere our Temple from the dust  
Rises, as it shall and must !

## OFFICIALS.

He is raving !

## CLERGY.

He is mad !

## BRAND.

Yes, I was so, when I thought  
Ye in some sense also wrought  
For the God who hateth Lies !  
When I dream'd that I could lure  
To your hearts His Spirit pure  
By a feat of compromise.  
Small the Church was ; logic thence  
Palter'd to the inference :  
Twice the size—that cannot fail ;  
Fivefold,—that must needs prevail !  
O, I saw not that the call  
Was for NOTHING or else ALL.  
Down that easy way I reel'd,  
But to-day the Lord has spoken,  
In this very hour has peal'd  
Overhead the awful blast  
Of His Judgment-trump at last,—

And I listen'd, in the wind  
 Of my anguish, baffled, broken,—  
 Even as David, having sinn'd— ;  
 Now all hesitation dies.  
 Men ! The Devil is COMPROMISE !

## THE MULTITUDE

*[with growing excitement].*

Down with them that quench'd our light,  
 Sapp'd the marrow of our might !

## BRAND.

In your souls the demon dwells  
 That has bound you with his spells.  
 You have put your powers at mart,  
 You have cleft yourselves in twain ;  
 Discord therefore numbs your brain,  
 Petrifies your hollow heart.  
 To the Church to-day what drew you ?  
 But the show, the show—nought else !—  
 Roll of organ, clash of bells,—  
 And to feel the tingle through you  
 Of a speaking-furnace dart,  
 As it lisps and lilts and prattles,  
 As it rolls and roars and rattles,  
 By the strictest rules of Art !

## THE DEAN

*[to himself].*

The Mayor's chatter, he must mean !

## THE MAYOR

*[likewise].*

That's the twaddle of the Dean !

## BRAND.

Nothing but the altar-glow  
Of the Festival you know.  
Get you home then to your sloth,  
Get you home to toil and stress,  
Soul as well as body clothe  
In its common work-day dress,—  
And the Bible slumber sound  
Till the next Saint's-day comes round.  
O, it was not to this end  
That the Offering-cup I drain'd !  
I the Greater Church ordain'd,  
That its shadow might descend,  
Not alone on Faith and Creed  
But on everything in life  
That by God's leave lives indeed ;—  
On our daily strain and strife,  
Midnight weeping, evening rest,  
Youth's impetuous delight,  
All that harbours of good right,  
Mean or precious, in the breast.  
Yonder foss's hidden thunder,  
And the beck that sparkles under,  
And the bellow of wild weather,  
And the murmurous ocean's tongue  
Should have melted, soul-possess'd,  
With the organ's roll together,  
And the gather'd people's song.  
Sweep this lying Labour hence !  
Mighty only in pretence !  
Stricken inly with decay  
On its consecration-day,—

Symbol of your impotence.  
All the germs of soul you aim  
By divided toil to maim ;  
For the week's six days ye drag  
To the deepest deep God's flag,  
For one only of the seven,  
Let it flutter forth to heaven !

## VOICES FROM THE THRONG.

Lead us, lead us ! Tempest lowers !  
Lead us, and the day is ours !

## THE DEAN.

Do not hear him ! Nought he knows  
Of the Faith a Christian owes !

## BRAND.

Ay, thou nam'st the flaw whereby  
Both the throng, and thou and I,  
Are beset ! To souls alone  
Faith is possible,—show me ONE !  
Show me one that his best treasure  
Has not idly flung to waste  
In his fumbling, or his haste !  
First, the reeling plunge for pleasure  
To the tabor's juggling strain  
Till the zest of pleasure's slain ;  
Then, soul-ruins, charr'd and stark,  
Turn to dance before the Ark !  
When the cup's last liquor slips  
Through the brain-worn cripple's lips,  
Ho ! 'tis time to pray and mend,  
Sure of pardon in the end.

First God's image you outwear,  
Live the beast within you bare,  
Then to Mercy cry your needs,  
Seeking God—as invalids !  
So, His Kingdom's overthrown.  
What should He with souls effete  
Groveling at His mercy-seat ?  
Said He not that then alone  
When your lifeblood pulses tense  
Through all veins of soul and sense,  
Ye His kingdom shall inherit ?  
Children ye must be to share it ;  
No man hobbles through its gate.  
Come then, ye whose cheek is rife  
With the bloom of childhood yet  
To the greater Church of Life !

THE MAYOR.

Open it then !

THE MULTITUDE

*[crying out as in anguish].*

No ! Not this !

BRAND.

It has neither mark nor bound,  
But its floor the green earth is,  
Mead and mountain, sea and sound ;  
And the overarching sky  
Is its only canopy.  
There shall all thy work be wrought  
As an anthem for God's ear,  
There thy week-day toil be sought  
With no sacrilege to fear.  
There the World be like a tree



Folded in its shielding bark ;  
 Faith and Action blended be.  
 There shall daily labour fuse  
 With right Teaching and right Use,  
 Daily drudgery be one  
 With star-flights beyond the sun,  
 One with Yule-tide revelry  
 And the Dance before the Ark !

*[A stormy agitation passes over the multitude; some retire; most press close about BRAND.]*

A THOUSAND VOICES.

Light is kindled in the dark ;—  
 LIFE and serving God's the same !

THE DEAN.

Woe on us ! He wins them—hark !  
 Mayor, sexton, beadle, clerk !

THE MAYOR

*[aside].*

Do not scream so, o' God's name !  
 With a bull who wants a bout ?  
 Let him roar his ravin out !

BRAND

*[to the multitude].*

Hence—away ! God is afar !  
 Cannot be where such men are !  
 Fair His kingdom is and free !

*[Locks the church-door and takes the keys in his hand.]*

Here I will be priest no more.  
I revoke my gift ;—from me  
No man shall receive the key  
Of the yet unopen'd door !

*[Throws the keys into the river.]*

Wilt thou in, thou slave of clay,—  
Through the crypt-hole worm thy way ;  
Lithe thy back is, creep and ply ;  
From that charnel let thy sigh  
Roam the earth with venom'd breath,  
Like the flagging gasp of death !

THE MAYOR

*[aside, with relief].*

Ha, HIS hope of knighthood's dim !

THE DEAN

*[similarly].*

Well ; no bishopric for HIM !

BRAND.

Come thou, young man—fresh and free—  
Let a life-breeze lighten thee  
From this dim vault's clinging dust.  
Conquer with me ! For thou must  
One day waken, one day rise,  
Nobly break with compromise ;—  
Up, and fly the evil days,  
Fly the maze of middle ways,  
Strike the foeman full and fair,  
Battle to the death declare !

THE MAYOR.

Hold ! I'll read the Riot Act !

## BRAND

BRAND.

Read ! With you I break my pact.

THE MULTITUDE.

Show the way, and we will follow !

BRAND.

Over frozen height and hollow,  
Over all the land we'll fare,  
Loose each soul-destroying snare  
That this people holds in fee,  
Lift and lighten, and set free,  
Blot the vestige of the beast,  
Each a Man and each a Priest,  
Stamp anew the outworn brand,  
Make a Temple of the land.

*[The multitude, including the SEXTON and  
SCHOOLMASTER, throng around him.  
BRAND is lifted on to their shoulders.]*

MANY VOICES.

'Tis a great Time ! Visions fair  
Dazzle through the noontide glare.

*[The great mass of the assemblage streams  
away up the valley ; a few remain.]*

THE DEAN

*[to the departing crowd].*

O, ye blinded ones, what would you ?  
Lo ! behind his seeming sooth  
Satan scheming to delude you !

THE MAYOR.

Ho there ! Turn ! Folks born to track  
Safe home-waters still and smooth !  
Stop !—ye go to ruin and wrack !—  
(Dogs ! And not a word comes back !)

THE DEAN.

Think of household and of home !

VOICES FROM THE MULTITUDE.

To a greater Home we come !

THE MAYOR.

Think of meadow-plot and field ;  
Think of teeming stall and fold !

VOICES.

Heavenly dews did manna yield  
When the chosen starved of old !

THE DEAN.

Hark ! your women cry in chorus !

VOICES

[*in the distance*].

Ours they are not if they quail !

THE DEAN.

'Father's gone !' your children wail.

THE WHOLE MULTITUDE.

Be against us, or be for us !

THE DEAN

[*gazes a while with folded hands after them ;  
then, dejectedly.*]

By his faithless flock deserted  
Stands the old shepherd, heavy-hearted,  
Plunder'd to the very skin !

THE MAYOR

*[shaking his fist at BRAND].*

HIS the scandal ; HIS the sin !

But we'll shortly win the fight !

THE DEAN

*[almost breaking down].*

Win ? Of all our people cheated ?—

THE MAYOR.

Ay, but we are not defeated,

If I know my lambs aright !

*[Follows them.]*

THE DEAN.

Whither will he, in heaven's name ?

As I live, he's after them !

Ha, my drooping courage rises,

I will also do and dare,—

Make assaults and capture prizes !

Bring my steed ;—that is, prepare

A safe, steady mountain mare !

*[They go.]*


---

*[By the highest farms in the valley. The land rises in the background, and passes into great barren mountains. Rain.]*

*[BRAND, followed by the multitude—men, women, and children,—comes up the slopes.]*

BRAND.

Look onward ! Triumph flies ahead !

Your homes are hidden in the deep,

And over it, from steep to steep,

The storm his cloudy tent has spread.

Forget the pit of sloth ye trod,  
Fly free aloft, ye sons of God !

A MAN.

Wait ; my old father is dead beaten.

ANOTHER.

Since yesterday I've nothing eaten——

SEVERAL.

Ay, still our hunger, slake our thirst !

BRAND.

On, on, across the mountain first !

THE SCHOOLMASTER.

Which way ?

BRAND.

All ways alike are right  
That reach the goal. This way pursue——

A MAN.

Nay, it is steep, and 'twill be night  
Ere we are well upon the height.

THE SEXTON.

And that way lies the Ice-church too.

BRAND.

The steep way is the short way still.

A WOMAN.

My foot is sore !

ANOTHER.

My child is ill !

A THIRD.

Where shall I get a drop to drink ?

THE SCHOOLMASTER.

Priest, feed the people ;—see, they sink.

MANY VOICES.

A miracle ! A miracle !

BRAND.

O, the slave-stamp has branded deep ;  
The toil you shirk, the hire you crave.  
Up, and shake off this deadly sleep,—  
Or else, get back into the grave !

THE SCHOOLMASTER.

Ay, he is right ; first face the foe ;  
The hire comes afterwards, you know.

BRAND.

It shall, as sure as God looks forth  
Over the breadth and depth of Earth !

MANY VOICES.

He's prophesying ! He's prophesying !

SEVERAL.

Hark, priest, will it be warm, this fight ?

OTHERS.

And bloody ? And will it last till night ?

THE SCHOOLMASTER

*[aside].*

I trust there is no risk of dying ?

A MAN.

Priest, must we really face the fire ?

ANOTHER.

What is MY portion of the hire ?

A WOMAN.

You're sure I shall not lose my son ?

THE SEXTON.

By Tuesday will the field be won ?

BRAND

*[looking round in bewilderment on  
the throng].*

What would you know ? What's your demand ?

THE SEXTON.

Firstly, how long we shall make war.

Then, of our total loss therein.

And finally,—how much we win ?

BRAND.

This ye demand ?

THE SEXTON.

Yes, 'faith ; before

We did not rightly understand.

BRAND

*[deeply moved].*

Then ye shall understand it now !

THE MULTITUDE

*[thronging closer].*

Speak ! Speak !

Q



BRAND.

How long the war will last ?  
As long as life, till ye have cast  
All ye possess before the Lord,  
And slain the Spirit of Accord ;  
Until your stiff will bend and bow,  
And every coward scruple fall  
Before the bidding : Nought or All !  
What you will lose ? Your gods abhor'd,  
Your feasts to Mammon and the Lord,  
The glittering bonds ye do not loathe,  
And all the pillows of your sloth !  
What you will gain ? A will that's whole,—  
A soaring faith, a single soul,  
The willingness to lose, that gave  
Itself rejoicing to the grave ;—  
A crown of thorns on every brow ;—  
That is the wage you're earning now !

THE MULTITUDE

[*with a furious cry*].

Betray'd ! Betray'd ! Deceived ! Misled !

BRAND.

I say but what I always said !

SEVERAL.

You promised us the victor's prize ;  
And now it turns to sacrifice !

BRAND.

I promised victory,—and to you  
Victory shall indeed be due.  
But every man who fights in front  
Must perish in the battle's brunt ;

If that he dares not, let him lay  
His arms down ere the battle-day.  
The flag's predestined to surrender  
That has a timorous defender;  
And he that shudders at the cost,  
Ere he is wounded, he is lost.

## THE MULTITUDE.

He insolently bids us die  
To serve unborn posterity !

## BRAND.

Through thorny steepes of sacrifice,  
The way unto our Canaan lies.  
Triumph through death ! I call you all,  
As Champions of God to fall !

## THE SEXTON.

Well, we are in a pretty plight !  
No mercy to expect below——

## THE SCHOOLMASTER.

Nay, we have bade the dale good-night.

## THE SEXTON.

And forward, forward, who will go ?

## SOME.

To death with him !

## THE SCHOOLMASTER.

'Twere pity, so !  
We want a general, you know !

## WOMEN

[*pointing in terror downwards*].  
The Dean ! The Dean !

## BRAND

THE SCHOOLMASTER

*[to the throng].*

Nay, never fear !

THE DEAN

*[comes in, followed by some of those who  
remained behind].*O my beloved ! O my sheep !  
To the old shepherd's voice give ear !

THE SCHOOLMASTER

*[to the throng].*A home no more we have below ;  
Better we follow up the steep !

THE DEAN.

That ye could grieve my heart so sore,  
And pierce me with a wound so deep !

BRAND.

Thou wast their soul's scourge evermore !

THE DEAN.

Don't heed him ! He is stuffing you  
With idle promises.

SEVERAL.

That's true !

THE DEAN.

But we are gracious, and forgive  
Where we true penitence perceive.  
O, turn your eyes into your hearts  
And mark the diabolic arts  
With which he won you to his aid !

## THE MULTITUDE.

Ay, sure enough ; we were betray'd !

## THE DEAN.

And then consider ; what can ye,  
A knot of scatter'd dalesmen, do ?  
Are high heroic deeds for you ?  
Can ye give bondsmen liberty ?  
You have your daily task ; pursue it !  
Whatever is beyond, eschew it !  
What can your prowess brave or baulk ?  
Ye have your humble homes to keep.  
What would you between eagle and hawk ?  
What would you between wolf and bear ?  
Ye fall but to the strongest's share.  
O my beloved ! O my sheep !

## THE MULTITUDE.

Ay, woe on us,—his words are true !

## THE SEXTON.

And yet, when from the dale we drew,  
Upon ourselves we lock'd the door ;  
We have no home there, as before.

## THE SCHOOLMASTER.

No, he has open'd all our eyes,  
Laid bare sins, sicknesses, and lies ;  
The sleepy people sleeps no more ;  
And deadly to our waking seems  
The life that satisfied our dreams.

## BRAND

THE DEAN.

Ah, trust me, that will soon pass over.  
All will return to the old state,  
If you will just be still and wait.  
These folks, I'll wage, will soon recover  
The wonted calm they have foregone.

BRAND.

Choose, men and women !

SOME.

Home !

OTHERS.

Too late !

Too late ! Along the height press on !

THE MAYOR

*[enters in haste].*

O lucky chance I caught you up !

WOMEN.

Ah, dear kind master, don't be stern !

THE MAYOR.

Not now ; provided you return !  
A better day, a brighter season  
Dawns for us ! If you'll hark to reason,  
You'll all be rich men ere you sup !

SEVERAL.

How so ?

THE MAYOR.

There is a herring-horde  
By millions swimming in the fjord !

## THE MULTITUDE.

What does he say ?

## THE MAYOR.

Set all to rights !  
Fly from these stormy uplands bare.  
Till now the herrings swam elsewhere ;  
Now, friends, at last, our barren bights  
Good fortune tardily requites.

## BRAND.

Between God's summons choose, and his !

## THE MAYOR.

Consult your own shrewd faculties !

## THE DEAN.

A Miracle Divine is here !  
A Providential Token clear !  
How oft I dreamt that this befell !  
I took it for a nightmare's spell ;  
And now its meaning is revealed——

## BRAND.

Yourselves you ruin, if you yield !

## MANY.

A herring horde !

## THE MAYOR.

By millions told !

## THE DEAN.

For wife and children, bread and gold !

## THE MAYOR.

You see, then, this is not an hour  
To waste your forces in a fray,  
And against energies whose power  
Strikes in the very Dean dismay.  
Now ye have other ends in view  
Than idly pining for the sky.  
Heaven, trust me, can your arms defy,  
And God's not easy to subdue.  
Don't mix yourselves in others' strife,  
But gather in the proffer'd fruit,  
That is a practical pursuit,  
That does not call for blood and knife ;  
That asks no sacrifice of life,  
And gives you its good things to boot !

## BRAND.

Just sacrifice is His demand,—  
Flame-writ in Heaven by His hand !

## THE DEAN.

Ah, if you feel a call that way,  
Just come to me next Sunday, say,  
And on my word I'll——

## THE MAYOR

[*interrupting*].

Yes, yes, yes !

## THE SEXTON

[*aside to the DEAN*].

Shall I be suffer'd keep my place ?

THE SCHOOLMASTER

[*similarly*].

Shall I be forced to leave my school ?

THE DEAN

[*aside to them*].

If these stiff necks you overrule  
We will deal mildly with your case.

THE MAYOR.

Away—away with you ! time flies !

THE SEXTON.

To boat, to boat, whoever's wise !

SOME.

Ay, but the priest ?——

THE SEXTON.

O, leave the fool !

THE SCHOOLMASTER.

Here speaks the Lord as clearly, look,  
As in an open printed book !

THE MAYOR.

Leave him ; that's law and justice too ;  
With babbling tales he flouted you.

SEVERAL.

He lied to us !

THE DEAN.

His creed's accursed ;  
And think, he never got a First !

SOME.

Never got WHAT ?



*BRAND*

THE MAYOR.

A grain of sense.

THE SEXTON.

Nay, of that we have evidence !

THE DEAN.

Vainly his mother's dying breath  
For the last sacrament made suit !

THE MAYOR.

His child he almost did to death !

THE SEXTON.

His wife as well !

WOMEN.

O heartless brute !

THE DEAN.

Bad spouse, bad father, and bad son,—  
Worse Christian surely there is none !

MANY VOICES.

Our ancient Church he overthrew !

OTHERS.

And shot the bolt upon the new !

OTHERS AGAIN.

He wreck'd us in a roaring stream !

THE MAYOR.

He pilfer'd my Asylum-scheme !

BRAND.

On every branded brow I see  
This generation's destiny.

THE WHOLE THROG

[roaring].

Hoo, never heed him ! Stone and knife !  
Set the fiend flying for his life !

[BRAND *is driven with stones out into the wild.*  
*His pursuers then return.*]

THE DEAN.

O my beloved ! O my sheep !  
Back to your homes and hearths once more ;  
Your eyes in true repentance steep,  
And see what blessings are in store.  
God in His mercy is so good,  
He asketh not the guiltless blood ;—  
And our authorities as well  
Are singularly placable ;  
Mayor, magistrate, and sheriff too,  
Will not be over hard on you ;  
And for myself, that large humanity  
That marks our modern Christianity  
Is mine ; your rulers will descend  
And dwell with you, as friend with friend.

THE MAYOR.

But should abuses be detected,  
They must, past question, be corrected.  
When we've a little time to move,  
I'll have appointed a commission,  
To seek how best we may improve  
Your intellectual condition.  
Some clergymen it should include  
Such as the Dean and I think good,—

And furthermore, if you prefer,  
The Sexton and the Schoolmaster,  
With others of a humbler sort,—  
You'll all be satisfied, in short.

## THE DEAN.

Yes, we'll relieve your burdens all,  
As ye this day have brought relief  
To your old shepherd in his grief.  
Let each find comfort in the thought  
That here a miracle was wrought.  
Farewell! Good fortune to your haul!

## THE SEXTON.

Ah, there's true charity, if you will!

## THE SCHOOLMASTER.

So meek and unassuming still.

## WOMEN.

So kindly, and so nice!

## OTHER WOMEN.

And then  
Such condescending gentlemen!

## THE SEXTON.

THEY don't demand the martyr's throe.

## THE SCHOOLMASTER.

The Lord's Prayer is not all they know!  
[*The throng passes on downwards.*]

THE DEAN

[to the MAYOR].

Ah, that has taken. It is plain  
A great revulsion is in train ;  
For, by God's blessed benefaction,  
There is a thing men call Reaction.

THE MAYOR.

'Twas MY achievement, to control  
The infant riot ere it grew.

THE DEAN.

Ah, to the miracle most was due.

THE MAYOR.

What miracle ?

THE DEAN.

The herring-shoal.

THE MAYOR

[whistling].

That was, I need not say, a lie.

THE DEAN.

Really, a lie ?

THE MAYOR.

I just let loose

At the first fancy that came by ;

Is it a sin such means to use

In such a cause ?

THE DEAN.

God bless me, no ;

Need is an adequate excuse.

THE MAYOR.

And then, to-morrow, when the glow  
Of agitation's dead, or dying,  
What will it matter if the end  
Was gain'd by telling truth, or lying?

THE DEAN.

I am no formalist, my friend.

[*Looks up into the wild.*]

But is't not Brand that yonder drags  
His slow course upward?

THE MAYOR.

Ay, you're right!  
A lonely warrior off to fight!

THE DEAN.

Nay, there's another too—that lags  
Far in the rear!

THE MAYOR.

Why ;—that is Gerd ;  
The herdsman's worthy of the herd.

THE DEAN

[*facetiously*].

When he has still'd his losing whim,  
This is the epitaph for him :  
' Here lieth Brand ; his tale's a sad one ;  
ONE soul he saved,—and that a mad one !'

THE MAYOR

[*with his finger to his nose*].

But, on reflection, I have some  
Misgivings that the folk's decree  
A little lack'd humanity.

THE DEAN

[*shrugging his shoulders*].

VOX POPULI VOX DEI. Come !

[*They go.*]

[*High up among the mountains. A storm is rising  
and chasing the clouds heavily over the snow-  
slopes ; black peaks and summits appear here and  
there, and are veiled again by the mist.*]

[*BRAND comes, bleeding and broken, up the  
mountain.*]

BRAND

[*stops and looks backward*].

From the vale they follow'd thronging,  
Never ONE has reach'd the height.  
Through all bosoms thrill'd the longing  
For a greater Day's dawn-light ;

Through all souls subduing strode  
The alarum-call of God.  
But the sacrifice they dread !  
Will, the weakling, hides his head ;—  
ONE man died for them of yore,—  
Cowardice is crime no more !

*[Sinks down on a stone, and looks with shrinking gaze around.]*

Oft I shudder'd at their doom ;  
And I walk'd, with horror quivering,  
As a little child walks shivering  
Amid shrieking shapes that loom  
In a dim and haunted room.  
But I check'd my bosom's quaking,  
And bethought me, and consoled it :  
Out of doors the day is breaking,  
Not of night it is, this gloom,  
But the shutters barr'd enfold it ;  
And I thought, the day inwelling,  
Rich with summer's golden bloom,  
Shall anon prevail, expelling  
All the darkness that is dwelling  
In the dim and haunted room.

O how bitter my dismay !  
Pitchy darkness on me broke,—  
And, without, a nerveless folk  
Sat forlorn by fjord and bay,  
Dim traditions treasuring  
While their sotted souls decay.  
Even as, year by year, the king  
Treasured up his Snefrid dead,  
Loosed the linen shroud o'erspread

By her mute heart listening low,  
Still upon hope's fragments fed,  
Thinking, 'Now the roses red  
In her pallid ashes blow !'  
None, like him, arose, and gave  
The grave's debt unto the grave ;  
None among them wise to know :  
'Dreaming cannot kindle dust,  
Down into the earth it must,  
Dust is only made to breed  
Nurture for the new-sown seed.'  
Night, black night,—and night again  
Over children, women, men !  
O could I with levin-flame  
Save them from the straw-death's shame !

[*Leaps up.*]

Gloomy visions I see sweep  
Like the Wild Hunt through the night.  
Lo, the Time is Tempest-dight,  
Calls for heroes, death to dare,  
Calls for naked steel to leap,  
And for scabbards to hang bare ;—  
Kinsfolk, lo, to battle riding,  
While their gentle brothers, hiding,  
From the hat of darkness peep.  
And yet more I do divine—  
All the horror of their shame,—  
Men that shriek and wives that whine,  
Deaf to every cry and claim,  
See them on their brows imprinting  
'Poor folks sea-bound' for their name,  
'Humble farthings of God's minting !'

R



Pale they listen to the fray,—  
Willing-weakness for their shield.—  
Rainbow o'er the mead of May,  
Flag, where fliest thou now afield ?  
Where's that tricolor to-day,—  
Which the wind of myriad song  
Beat and bellied from the mast,  
Till a zealot king at last  
Split it into teeth and tongue ?  
But you used the tongue to brag ;  
And what boots the toothed flag  
If the dragon dares not bite ?  
Would the folk had spared those cheers,  
And the zealot king those shears !  
Four-square flag of peace suffices,  
When a stranded craft capsizes,  
To give warning of her plight !

Direr visions, worse foreboding,  
Glare upon me through the gloom !  
Britain's smoke-cloud sinks corroding  
On the land in noisome fume ;  
Smirches all its tender bloom,  
All its gracious verdure dashes,  
Sweeping low with breath of bane,  
Stealing sunlight from the plain,  
Showering down like rain of ashes  
On the city of God's doom.—  
Fouler-featured men are grown ;—  
Dropping water's humming drone  
Echoes through the mine's recesses :  
Bustling, smug, a pigmy pack  
Plucks its prey from ore's embraces,  
Walks with crooked soul and back,

Glares like dwarfs with greedy eyes  
For the golden glittering lies ;  
Speechless souls with lips unsmiling,  
Hearts that fall of brothers rends not,  
Nor their own to fury frets,  
Hammer-wielding, coining, filing ;  
Light's last gleam forlornly flies ;  
For this bastard folk forgets  
That the need of willing ends not  
When the power of willing dies !

Direr visions, direr doom,  
Glare upon me through the gloom.  
Craft, the wolf, with howl and yell,  
Bays at Wisdom, sun of earth ;  
Cries of ruin ring to North,  
Calls to arms by fjord and fell ;  
And the pigmy, quaking, grim,  
Hisses : 'What is that to him ?'  
Let the other nations glow,  
Let the mighty meet the foe,  
We can ill afford to bleed,—  
We are weak, may fairly plead  
From a giants' war exemption,  
Need not offer All as meed  
For our fraction of Redemption.  
Not for us the cup He drank,  
Not for us the thorny wreath  
In His temples drove its teeth,  
Not for us the spear-shaft sank  
In the Side whose life was still.  
Not for us the burning thrill  
Of the nails that clove and tore.  
We, the weak, the least accounted,

Battle-summons may ignore !  
Not for us the Cross He mounted !  
Just the stirrup-slash's stain,  
Just the gash the cobbler scored  
In the shoulder of the Lord,  
Is our portion of His Pain !

*[Throws himself down in the snow and  
covers his face ; presently he looks up.]*

Was I dreaming ! Dream I still ?  
Mist-enshrouded is the hill.  
Were those visions but the vain  
Phantoms of a fever'd brain ?  
Is the image clean outworn  
Whereunto Man's soul was born ?  
Is the Maker's spirit fled——

*[Listening.]*

Ha, what song breaks overhead ?

INVISIBLE CHOIR

*[in the sough of the storm].*

Never shalt thou win His spirit ;  
Thou in mortal flesh wast born :  
Spurn his bidding or revere it ;  
Equally thou art forlorn.

BRAND

*[repeats the words, and says softly].*

Woe's me, woe ; I well may fear it !  
Stood He not, and saw me pray,  
Sternly smote my prayer away ?  
All I loved He has demanded,

All the ways of light seal'd fast,  
Made me battle single-handed,  
And be overthrown at last !

THE CHOIR

[*louder, above him*].

Worm, thou mayst not win His spirit,—  
For Death's cup thou hast consumed ;  
Fear His Will, or do not fear it,  
Equally thy work is doom'd.

BRAND

[*softly*].

Agnes, Alf, the gladsome life  
When unrest and pain I knew not—  
I exchanged for tears and strife,  
In my own heart plunged the knife,—  
But the fiend of evil slew not.

THE CHOIR

[*tender and alluring*].

Dreamer, thine is not His spirit,  
Nought to Him thy gifts are worth ;  
Heaven thou never shalt inherit,  
Earth-born creature, live for Earth !

BRAND

[*breaks into soft weeping*].

Alf and Agnes, come unto me !  
Lone I sit upon this peak !  
Keen the north wind pierces through me,  
Phantoms seize me, chill ones, meek—— !

[*He looks up ; a glimmering space opens and clears in the mist ; the APPARITION of a WOMAN stands in it, brightly clad, with a cloak over its shoulders. It is AGNES.*]

THE PHANTOM

[*smiles, and spreads its arms towards him*].  
See, again, Brand, I have found thee !

BRAND

[*starting up in bewilderment*].  
Agnes ! Agnes ! What is this ?

THE PHANTOM.

Dearest, it is thy release  
From the fever'd dreams that bound thee !

BRAND.

Agnes ! Agnes !  
[*He is hurrying towards her.*]

THE PHANTOM

[*screams*].

Cross not ! Deep  
Rolls between us the abyss,  
Where the mountain-torrents sweep !

[*Tenderly.*]

Thou dost dream not, neither sleep,  
Nor with phantoms wagest war ;  
Dear, by sickness thou wast wasted,—  
Frenzy's bitter cup hast tasted,  
Dreamt, thy wife had fled afar.—

BRAND.

Oh, thou livest ! Blessed be——!

THE PHANTOM

[*hastily*].

Peace ! Of that no murmur now !  
Follow fast, the moments press.

BRAND.

Oh, but Alf ?

THE PHANTOM.

Alive, no less.

BRAND.

Lives !

THE PHANTOM.

And with unfaded brow !

All thy sorrows did but seem !  
All thy battles were a dream,  
Alf is with thy mother ; she  
Vigorous yet, and stalwart he ;  
Still the old Church stands entire ;  
Pluck it down if thou desire ;—  
And the dalesmen still drudge on  
As they did in good days gone.

BRAND.

‘ Good ’ ?

THE PHANTOM.

For days of peace they were.

BRAND.

‘ Peace ’ ?

THE PHANTOM.

O haste thee, Brand, O fly !

## BRAND

BRAND.

Woe, I dream !

THE PHANTOM.

Thy dream's gone by,  
But thou needest sheltering care——

BRAND.

I am strong.

THE PHANTOM.

Ah me, not yet ;  
Still the fell dream lies in wait.  
Once again from wife and child  
It shall sweep thee, cloud-beguiled,  
Once again thy soul obscure,—  
If thou wilt not seek the cure.

BRAND.

Oh, vouchsafe it !

THE PHANTOM.

Thou availest,  
Thou alone, that cure to reach.

BRAND.

Name it then !

THE PHANTOM.

The aged leech,  
Who has conn'd so many a page,—  
The unfathomably sage,  
He discover'd where thou ailest.  
All the phantoms of thy strife,  
THREE WORDS conjured them to life.

Them, thou boldly must recall,  
From thy memory efface them,  
From thy conscience blot, erase them ;  
At their bidding, lo, thou burnest  
In this maddening blast of bane ;—  
O forget them, if thou yearnest  
To make white thy soul again !

BRAND.

Say, what are they ?

THE PHANTOM.

NOUGHT OR ALL.

BRAND

[*reeling back*].

Is it so ?

THE PHANTOM.

So sure as I

Am alive, and thou wilt die.

BRAND.

Woe on us ! The sword once more  
Swings above us, as before !

THE PHANTOM.

Brand, be kind ; my breast is warm ;  
Clasp me close in thy strong arm ;—  
Let us fly where summer's sun——

BRAND.

Never more that plague shall bind me.

THE PHANTOM.

Ah, Brand, all is not yet won.



BRAND

*[shaking his head].*

I have flung that dream behind me.  
Me no more that phantom-strife's  
Horror thrills ;—but Life's ! but Life's !

THE PHANTOM.

Life's ?

BRAND.

Come, Agnes, where I lead !

THE PHANTOM.

Brand, what is it thou wilt do ?

BRAND.

What I must : the DREAM make TRUE,—  
Live the vision into deed.

THE PHANTOM.

Ha, thou canst not ! Think but whither  
That road led thee.

BRAND.

Thither ! Thither !

THE PHANTOM.

What thou dared'st, dream-beguiled,  
Wilt thou, whole and waking, dare ?

BRAND.

Whole and waking.

THE PHANTOM.

Lose the child ?

BRAND.

Lose it.

THE PHANTOM.

Brand !

BRAND.

I must.

THE PHANTOM.

And tear

Me all bleeding from the snare ?

With the rods of sacrifice

Scourge me to the death ?

BRAND.

I must.

THE PHANTOM.

Quench the glow of sunny skies,

Turn all bright things into dust,

Never pluck life's fruitage fair,

Never be upborne by song ?

Ah, so many memories throng !

BRAND.

Nought avails. Lose not thy prayer.

THE PHANTOM.

Heed'st thou not thy martyr's meed ?

Baffled where thou sought'st to waken,

Stoned by all, by all forsaken ?

BRAND.

Not for recompense I bleed ;

Not for trophies do I fight.

## BRAND

## THE PHANTOM.

For a race that walks entomb'd !

## BRAND.

One to many can give light.

## THE PHANTOM.

All their generation's doom'd.

## BRAND.

Much availeth one will's might.

## THE PHANTOM.

'One' with fiery sword of yore  
Man of Paradise bereft !  
At the gate a gulf he cleft ;—  
Over that thou mayst not soar !

## BRAND.

But the path of YEARNING's left !

## THE PHANTOM

*[vanishes in a thunder-clap ; the mist fills the place  
where it stood ; and a piercing scream is  
heard, as of one flying].*

Die ! Earth cannot use thee more !

## BRAND

*[stands a moment in bewilderment].*  
Out into the mist it leapt,—  
Plumy wings of falcon beating,  
Down along the moorland swept.  
For a finger it was treating,  
That the hand might be its prize— !  
Ha, the Spirit of Compromise !

GERD

*[comes with a rifle].*

Hast thou seen the falcon ?

BRAND.

Yea ;

This time I have seen him.

GERD.

Say,

Quick, which way thou saw'st him fly ;

We will chase him, thou and I.

BRAND.

Steel and bullet he defies ;  
Oftentimes you think he flies  
Stricken by the mortal lead,—  
But draw near to strike him dead,  
Up he starts again, secure,  
With the old cajoling lure.

GERD.

See, the hunter's gun I 've got,  
Steel and silver is the shot ;  
'Trow, my wits are less astray  
Than they reckon !

BRAND.

Have thy way !

*[Going.]*

GERD.

Priest, thou walkest lame afoot.

BRAND.

I was hunted.

GERD.

Red thy brow  
As the blood of thy heart's root !

BRAND.

I was beaten.

GERD.

Musical

Was thy voice of old, that now  
Rattles like the leaves of Fall.

BRAND.

I was——

GERD.

What ?

BRAND.

By one and all

Spurn'd.

GERD

*[looking at him with great eyes].*

Aha,—I know thee now !

For the priest I took thee ;—pest  
Take the priest and all the rest !  
The One, greatest Man art thou !

BRAND.

So I madly dared to trust.

GERD.

Let me look upon thy hands !

BRAND.

On my hands ?

GERD.

They're pierced and torn !

In thy hair the blood-dew stands,  
Riven by the fanged thorn  
In thy forehead fiercely thrust.  
Thou the crucifix didst span !  
In my childhood Father told me  
'Twas another, long ago,  
Far away, that suffer'd so ;—  
Now I see he only fool'd me ;—  
Thou art the Redeeming-man !

BRAND.

Get thee hence !

GERD.

Shall I not fall

Low before thy feet and pray ?

BRAND.

Hence !

GERD.

'THOU gavest the blood away

That hath might to save us all !

BRAND.

Oh, no saving plank I see,  
In my own soul's agony !

GERD.

Take the rifle ! Shoot them dead— !

BRAND

*[shaking his head].*

Man must struggle till he falls.

GERD.

Oh, not thou ; thou art the head !  
By the nails thy hands were gored ;—  
Thou art chosen ; thou art Lord.

BRAND.

I'm the meanest worm that crawls.

GERD

[*looks up ; the clouds are lifting*].  
Know'st thou where thou stand'st ?

BRAND

[*gazing before him*].

Below

The first step of the ascent ;  
It is far, and I am faint.

GERD

[*more fiercely*].  
Say ! Where art thou, dost thou know ?

BRAND.

Yes, now falls the misty shroud.

GERD.

Yes, it falls : without a cloud  
Svartetind impales the blue !

BRAND

[*looking up*].  
Svartetind ? The ice-church !

GERD.

Yes !

Here thou camest churchward, too !

BRAND.

Hence ! a thousand miles away ! ——  
 How I long to fly afar,  
 Where the sunlight and the balm  
 And the holy hush of calm,  
 And Life's summer-kingsdoms are !

[*Bursts into tears.*]

Jesus, I have cried and pleaded,—  
 From thy bosom still outcast ;  
 Thou hast pass'd me by unheeded  
 As a well-worn word is pass'd ;  
 Of Salvation's vesture, stain'd  
 With the wine of tears unfeign'd,  
 Let me clasp one fold at last !

GERD

[*pale*].

What is this ? Thou weepest, thou,  
 Hot tears, till thy cheek is steaming,—  
 And the glacier's death-shroud streaming  
 Silently from crag and crest,—  
 And my memory's frozen tides  
 Melt to weeping in my breast,—  
 And the snowy surplice glides  
 Down the Ice-priest's giant sides—

[*Trembling.*]

Man, why wept'st thou not till now ?

BRAND

[*radiant, clear, and with an air of  
 renewed youth.*]

Through the Law an ice-track led,—  
 Then broke summer overhead !



Till to-day I strove alone  
To be God's pure tablet-stone ;—  
From to-day my life shall stream  
Lambent, glowing, as a dream.  
The ice-fetters break away,  
I can weep,—and kneel,—and pray !  
[*Sinks upon his knees.*]

GERD

[*looks askance upwards, and then, softly  
and timidly.*]

There he sits, the ugly sprite !  
Tis his shadow sweeps the land,  
Where he flogs the mountain height  
With his flapping vans in flight.  
Now Redemption is at hand——  
If the silver will but bite !

[*Puts the rifle to her cheek and shoots. A  
hollow roar, as of distant thunder, is heard  
far up the precipice.*]

BRAND

[*starting up.*]

Ha, what dost thou ?

GERD.

Down he slides !  
I have hit him ;—down he swings,—  
Shrieking, till the echo rings ;  
Plumes in thousand from his sides  
Flutter down the beetling brae ;—  
See how large he looms, how white— !  
Ha, he's rolling down this way !

BRAND

*[sinking down].*

Blood of children must be spilt  
To atone the parent's guilt !

GERD.

Tenfold vaster at his fall  
Grew the tent of Heaven above !  
See him tumble ; see him sprawl—!  
Ah, I will not shudder more ;  
He is white, see, as a dove—!

*[Shrieks in terror.]*

Hu, the horrible thunder-roar !

*[Throws herself down in the snow.]*

BRAND

*[crouches under the descending avalanche,  
and, looking up, speaks].*

God, I plunge into death's night,—  
Shall they wholly miss thy Light  
Who unto man's utmost might  
Will'd—?

*[The avalanche buries him ; the whole valley  
is swallowed up].*

A VOICE.

*[calls through the crashing thunder].*

He is the God of Love.

THE END.



## NOTES

P. 10.—‘Two thoughts,’ etc.

With the whole of this passage compare the poem *Lysrød*, where he contrasts with his schoolboy dread of the dark the ‘light-horror’ of his maturity. ‘Now it is the trolls of day, now it is the noise of life, that scatter all the chill terrors into my breast.’ The idea fascinated Ibsen. His poem first appeared in the cycle, *I Billedgalleriet* (*Ill. Nyhedsblad*, 1859, No. 38); in 1863 he republished it, much altered (*Ill. Nyhedsblad*, 1863, No. 6). It was the only poem of the cycle admitted into the *Digte*.

P. 17.—My *Ægir*’s courser.

*Ægir*, in the Eddas, is a cloud- or water-giant. Waves are called ‘*Ægir*’s daughters’ (*Ægiss dætrr*) in a fragment quoted in *Corp. Poet. Bor.* ii. 54. The name *Ægir* itself is probably derived from water (Goth. *ahva*), and thus cognate with *ey*, ‘island.’ Cf. E. H. Meyer, *Germanische Mythologie*, p. 156.

P. 26.—‘It is not dogmas I defend,’ etc.

Cf. the following utterance quoted by Brandes from a letter of Ibsen’s to him: ‘The State is rooted in time, it will culminate in time. Greater things than it will fall. Every form of religion will fall. Neither moral notions nor Art forms have an eternity before them. How many of them are we really bound to

cling to? Who will guarantee that 2+2 in Jupiter will not make 5?'—*Moderne Geister*, p. 436.

P. 21.—'The new brood.'

A vivid picture of the ways of that more stringent Evangelicalism which in Norway became conspicuous about the middle of the century among the younger clergy, is given by Vinje in *Ferdaminni* (1860). He describes two visits to a 'good old priest' of the school of Praed's Vicar. On the second, 'I knew neither him nor his wife nor the house again. For the priest had now a 'chaplain,' who was also his son-in-law; and the chaplain had 'turned the old joyous house upside down. The women-folk had to sit and knit woollen jackets and stoinachers for the Zulus, and discourse with ancient maids about baptism and missions, and the priest himself had to follow suit. . . . The young people were forbidden even to dance. . . . The priest was unhappy, but was forced to submit to "the new Age" and "the new faith."' 'It has reached such a pitch,' he complains to the poet, 'that all the better folks in the parish merely laugh at this son-in-law of mine. . . . But he keeps me in such awe that I dare not resist, and even threatens me with damnation; and declares that the whole of the older priesthood had no idea of the true faith.' Vinje opines that the son-in-law had an imperfect digestion.—*Skripter i Utval*, ii. p. 276 f.

P. 30.—'A path along the crags,' etc.

The description is here partly due to a reminiscence of Ibsen's tour in Sogne in 1862. The mountain track he followed from Lom and Bæverdal to Fortun (near the head of the Lysterfjord) emerges quite suddenly, at the lower end of the Bergsdal, upon the deep and narrow Fortundal, which runs transversely about 1000

feet below. A jutting crag commands the whole valley and the steep zigzag descent to Fortun. No part of the fjord is, however, visible from this or any neighbouring point.

P. 33.—‘The falcon.’

The falcon, or hawk, here first introduced, is the most obscure piece of symbolism in the poem. Like the enigmatic ‘Bøyg’ in *Peer Gynt*, it seems to stand less for a specific idea than for a cluster of related ideas, of which now one and now another is prominent in the poet’s mind. Five things are told us about the hawk. (1) It is the enemy of Gerd, who persistently tries to kill it, and finally succeeds. (2) It will not enter the ice-church. (3) It is associated with the two moments (pp. 123 and 274) at which Brand is about to abandon his rigid formula, and yield to human affection. (4) It is identified with the ‘tempter in the wilderness,’ who assumes the form, and pleads in the spirit, of Agnes (p. 268). (5) When slain by Gerd, it is found to be ‘white as a dove’ (p. 275). All these statements seem to point to the view taken in the Introduction, that the hawk symbolises that ‘humane’ yielding or compromising spirit which is alike opposed to the blind unsociality of the outlaw (1), to the merciless rigour of nature (2), to inflexible Will (3), while yet allied to love (5), and thus to Agnes (4). But I must not withhold from the reader one equivocal piece of evidence supplied by Ibsen himself, who, on my submitting to him the substance of the above, declared that he could ‘very well accept this view’—an enigmatic reply of which the reader may make what he can. We need surely not hesitate, however, to reject Vasenius’s view that the hawk is the spirit of *absolute duty*. This is

only made plausible by a strained interpretation of (3) above.

P. 36.—‘*Svartetind*.’

Pronounce *Svartētin*.

P. 36—‘Of dulness, dulness is the brood,’ etc.

Cf. the passage from *Kierkegaard*, quoted in the Introduction, p. liii. The thought is also found in a well-known maxim of La Rochefoucauld: *La faiblesse est plus opposée à la vertu que le vice*.

P. 38.

Vinje criticised the ‘rough’ handling of the Norwegian peasant in this scene. Cf. passage quoted in the Introduction, p. xxxvi.

P. 38.—**The Mayor.**

The use of the term ‘Mayor’ for the Norwegian ‘Foged’ may be thought an unwarrantable freedom. Certainly the official functions of the two are widely different. The *Foged* is not an elective or a municipal officer, but a district overseer appointed by Government, whose principal functions are to collect and pay in the local taxes and to arrest criminals. His nearest English equivalent is probably the Sheriff. Yet the actual relation of Ibsen’s *Foged* to the little community he leads is at least as like that of the English Mayor; and where there is little to choose, a verse translator may be pardoned if he avoids a term which no ingenuity will decoy into rhyme.

P. 42.—‘Nations, though poor and sparse, that live,’ etc.

Cf. Ibsen’s reference, in the speech over the grave of P. A. Munch at Rome, to ‘those great critical

moments of which history attests that they nerved and inspired (*løftede og staalettede*) peoples, as well as individuals, but which nowadays have a different effect.' Ibsen was actually at work upon *Brand* when this speech was pronounced (June 12, 1865).

P. 51.—'Flinging pebbles like witch-corn.'

The expression *Koglekorn* is apparently original. Ibsen informs me that he meant corn used by witches in incantation.

P. 64.—*Brand's Mother.*

The prototype of Brand's Mother was a high-born peasant woman of Lom, Rønnaug Nilsdatter Graffer, wife of Lensmand Ole Johannesen Staff, who had shortly before been concerned in a will case. Ibsen met her in his journey of 1862 in Sogne.—Halvorsen, *Norsk Forf.-lex.* art. 'IBSEN.'

P. 74.—'Toss a babe overboard,' etc.

Brand means that to ask in God's name 'less' for God than that 'All,' which was His due, was as logical as to commit a gross crime and expect God to 'bless' it.

P. 74.—'Till you, like Job, in ashes die.'

The commas are misleading and should be cancelled. But even so, it must be confessed, the thought is imperfectly expressed. The original, however, is here itself somewhat awkward :

'For dig er intet bødsværk, för,  
Som Hjob på askens hob, du dör.'

'Before you die, like Job on the ash-heap.' Ibsen means, of course, 'until you die in the penitential spirit of Job.'



P. 83.—‘**So prone,**’ etc.

The description of the parsonage is also due to an experience of this journey. Near Hellesylt, in Sundelven, Ibsen visited a priest whose former home had been destroyed by a landslip, and who, with wife and child, occupied a farmhouse in a dizzy spot on the mountain-side. He ‘asked the priest’s wife, an amiable young woman, whether she were not equally afraid of such a catastrophe here? “No,” said she; “for the house is built so close against the cliff that the earth and stones would pass by without touching it.”’—Jæger, *H. Ibsen* (tr. p. 140).

P. 85.—‘**Like a glad sunny day in spring.**’

Arne Löchen has noticed Ibsen’s fondness of this image for awakenings of the soul. Cf. in the *Comedy of Love*, Falk’s ‘Min vår er kommen’ and Svanhild’s ‘Nu springer lövet ud—’; while to ‘fulfil one’s call’ is ‘to live amid God’s springtime-nature.’—*Nyt Tidsskrift*, ii. p. 415.

P. 91.—‘**Love-account.**’

In the original, *conto caritatis*; while *mandeviljens quantum satis* corresponds in the previous couplet. Nothing seems gained by keeping these macaronic scraps.

P. 100.—‘**Isaac’s Fear.**’

See Gen. xxxi. 53.

P. 103.—‘**The Succession Court.**’

The *Skifteret* (Division Court) is a court for the division of inheritances in cases of dispute.

P. 105.—**King Belä.**

This is another local touch connecting *Brand* with the Sogne district, and due probably to Ibsen’s

wanderings there in 1862. King Belë's story is told in the opening chapter of a far more famous Sogne legend, that of Frithjof. It may be opined that the *Foged* owes his familiarity with him essentially to Tegnér; but Tegnér's source was the *Friðþjof* saga, ch. i., where we are briefly told that 'King Belë ruled the Sogne district, and lived at Systrond. Opposite [across the Sogne] at Framnæs, lived . . . Thorstein Vikingsson, who had a son called Friðþjof, strongest of men. . . . King Belë lost a large part of his wealth when he grew old. . . . He made Thorstein president of a third part of his kingdom. . . . In his last sickness Belë called his sons together, and spoke: "This sickness takes me to the death; and I beg you to have those for friends whom I have had. . . ." When Belë and Thorstein died, they were buried in two graves on opposite sides of the fjord (*Friðþjofs saga hins frækna*, ch. i.). 'The tomb (*gravhaug*) of King Bele is still pointed out,' says Bædeker. But this is only an example of the power of a legend to create its own evidence. For, in a letter of 1693 from a clergyman in Sogne to a Danish scholar, the writer declares that not the least trace of Belë's grave is to be seen (quoted by S. Bugge, *Studien über die Entstehung der nord. Götter- u. Heldensagen*, i. 286). The legendary Belë of the Saga has quite obscured the nature-myth in which he originated. In the Edda, Beli, 'the roarer,' is a storm-giant, slain by Freyr, who is thence called *Belja bani* (*Voluspá*, 54). Cf. E. H. Meyer, *Germanische Mythologie*, p. 157.

P. 108.—'The little flights to purer air . . .  
Shall be my unremitting care.'

This sarcasm is aimed at the pretensions of the 'Intelligens' party, and in particular of the officials,

to be the mainstay of culture and of 'ideal interests.' A. Garborg, in an interesting if one-sided article (*Fedraheimen*, 1881, Nos. 42-4: 'Ibsen som Intelligens Diktar'), quotes a letter from a *fargelaus Mann* ('a neutral'), to the effect that if the party of Freedom won the day, all Art and Poetry would die out of the land. Similar utterances, *mutatis mutandis*, are not unknown in England.

P. 119.—'The Parson does not mean to preach.'

Cf. the passage in Act II. (p. 46), where it is said of the Dean that he would put off the service under the stress of storm. Brand has in a manner put himself on the side of the opportunist cleric depicted in Act V. *Brand* is full of these unobtrusive correspondences.

P. 145.—'White as yonder brae.'

The 'brae' in Norway (*bræ*) is essentially a slope of ice or snow—a glacier. The translator pleads guilty to having occasionally availed himself of this sense, while elsewhere using it in that which applies to English or Scottish scenery.

P. 153.—'I have never yielded.'

There is a striking echo of 'this reply in Ibsen's dignified letter to the King, in application for a pension, written shortly after the appearance of *Brand*. 'It rests in your Majesty's hand, whether I shall be forced to be silent and submit to the bitterest renunciation which can befall a man's soul,—that of having to let go his work in life, to have to give way where I know that I have received the weapon of the spirit to fight with; and that is for me doubly hard, for I have till this day never yielded.'—Quoted by Halvorsen, *u. s.*

P. 251.—‘A commission.’

Cf. the saying of Ibsen quoted in the Introduction, p. xlii.

P. 254.—‘One soul he saved,’ etc.

This trait recurs in the *Enemy of the People*, where Stockman has a single voice on his side,—that of the drunken man.

P. 256.—

‘The king

Treasured up his Snefrid dead.’

The story of Snæfríðr is told in the Saga of King Harald the Fairhaired (*Haralds Saga hins harfagra*, ch. 25: ‘Fra Svasa jötni’): King Harald was once the guest of Svasi. Now Snæfríðr, Svasi’s daughter, was a maiden of great beauty; and as she filled the cup for the king, immediately it was as if a hot fire ran through his body. . . . But Svasi said she should not be his, save by violence, unless he first wedded her. And the king took Snæfríðr, and wedded her, and loved her so passionately that he neglected his kingdom and all that belonged to the kingly dignity. They had four sons. . . . Thereafter Snæfríðr died; yet her outer form changed in nowise; but she remained as rosy-fresh as when she lived. The king sat ever brooding over her, and dreamed that she would revive. And so it went on for three years, he sorrowing for her death, while all his people sorrowed for his delusion. Then came Thorleifr the sage, and wisely healed him of it, saying, “It is no wonder, O king, that thou mournest so noble and beautiful a wife, . . . but the honour is less than is seemly in so far as she lies over long in the same clothes. Meeter far were it for her to be lifted up, and her dress changed.” But as soon as she was lifted up in the

bed, corruption and all manner, of foul odours were perceived, and a pyre was hastily made, and she was burnt. . . . Thus she sank to ashes; and the king recovered his wits, and ruled his kingdom, gladdening his subjects, and made glad by them.'

P. 257.—'Kinsfolk, lo, to battle riding, etc.

The Danish war, though the immediate occasion of the passionate anti-Norwegian invective of *Brand*, is here for the first time directly alluded to. The facts have been briefly stated in the Introduction.

P. 258.—'Rainbow o'er the mead of May.'

This is almost the only passage in the poem which is necessarily obscure to the reader not specially versed in Norwegian politics. The *tricolor* is the national flag of Norway, which, as such, is associated with the declaration of national independence, May 17, 1814. The lyric celebrations of this day ('Syttendemaj-sange') are full of ecstatic allusions to the 'trefarvede Norriges Flag,' which ushered in 'Frihedens hellige Dag' and 'Tyranniets Sarkofag.' (Cf. e.g. Welhaven's 'Op I brave Sønner af Norge' 1834).

For official purposes, however, the flag of Norway was blended with that of Sweden, somewhat in the fashion of the English 'Union Jack,' and this arrangement held during the whole of the first thirty years of the union (1814-44). But the autocratic proclivities of the king, Carl Johan, powerfully stimulated the separatist tendencies of Norway, and the demand became loud for the official use of the Norwegian flag. Carl Johan's liberal-minded successor, Oskar I., took a keen interest in Norwegian aspirations, and almost his first act was the virtual concession of this

demand. By a royal resolution of June 20, 1844, it was arranged that in future each country should use its own flag, with certain slight modifications to denote the union. These were—(a) a union-mark introduced into the upper quarter nearest the pole; (b) the division of the outer edge into *teeth and tongue* ('split og tunge';—Ibsen uses the very words of the resolution). This concession was celebrated with another burst of song, in which all the leading Norwegian poets participated. We may specify Welhaven's 'Kong Oscar sendte fra sin Hal,' Wergeland's 'Du engang var en Flammesky,' and Sivertson's 'Vift stolt trefarvet norske Flag.'

The rainbow comparison in the text is itself due to Welhaven, one of whose union-songs opens thus:— 'The dark cloud flies from the crags before the rays of a potent sun; and over the brother-kingdoms stands the fairest symbol of Concord. Like the rainbow-splendour, lulling a dark conflict with the power of light, it unfolds over the two crowns.' In the present generation the union-mark itself has come to be regarded as a blot upon the escutcheon, a stain upon the 'clean Norse flag.' On the whole matter, cf. *Om Flaget*, by O. Storm (Kristiania, 1893); Øverland, *Lærebog i Norges nyeste historie*. Større udg. (Krist. 1887).

P. 260.—'The cobbler.'

In the original, 'Ahasuerus.' The reference to the legend of the Wandering Jew need hardly be pointed out.

P. 264.—'The aged leech,' etc.

Cf. the doctor's words, p. 91.

P. 269.—‘**Hast thou seen the falcon?**’ etc.

An attempt has been made in the Introduction (p. lxiv-v.) to explain the difficult symbolism of the final scene.

P. 275.—‘**Who unto man’s utmost might,**’ etc.

The original has here and in the next line two macaronic verses :—

‘*Mandeviljens quantum satis,  
Han er deus caritatis.*’

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